PARTISAN REVIEW

VOLUME V
1938

AMS REPRINT COMPANY
New York 3, N. Y.

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A LITERARY MONTHLY

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ROSA LUXEMBURG: LETTERS FROM PRISON

Rosa Luxemburg was born in 1870 at Zamosc, in Russian Poland, the daughter of a well-to-do Jewish merchant. Her revolutionary career began with the organization of a secret Socialist discussion group among her schoolmates at the Warsaw gymnasium and a flight across the border into Switzerland to escape the Czar's police. It ended in 1919 with her murder by Guards officers in Berlin. Rosa Luxemburg is known to history in many roles: as the greatest political intelligence in the old German social democracy; as the author of *Die Akkumulation des Kapitals,* a major contribution to the Marxist theory of this century; as the opponent of the reformist perversion of Marxism advanced by Edouard Bernstein and his followers before the war; as one of the few leaders of the Second International who opposed the war after it began—as well as before—and who went to prison rather than remain silent; as the leader, with Karl Liebknecht, of the heroic and tragic attempt of the Spartacists to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat in Germany; as a formidable agitator, a pamphleteer of the utmost brilliance, and a great revolutionary. But there is also the Rosa Luxemburg of the letters we print here, the Luxemburg whose human relationships are so warm, whose sympathy for animals, birds, even plants and insects, is so acute as to cause her constant pain. The letters were all written from one or another prison cell during the war. They were addressed to her intimate friend, the wife of Karl Liebknecht. Another friend, Luise Kautsky, wrote in the introduction to a collection of letters written by Luxemburg to the Kautskys: "As compared with the prison letters to Sonia Liebknecht, which resemble a delicate picture in subdued colors projected against a background of grey, these letters give the effect of a painting of many colors, with virile red predominating." It is true that "virile red" was dominant, but the quiet, reflective greys also had their place in Luxemburg's personality. The letters to Sonia Liebknecht supply a needed corrective to the usual impression. The present translation, so far as we know, is the first rendering in English. The "Newsreel" was compiled by Dwight Macdonald.

In July, 1918, Sonia Liebknecht received a letter from prison which is not in this collection. It was from her husband: "I hear that my friend, Rosa Luxemburg, was arrested on July tenth. She is delivered up to her enemies and her frail health will suffer terribly in the bad air, as she can have no exercise out of doors. Last time, she was dragged off

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in the 'green cart' with whores and women thieves; then she was in prison for a year. Now they want to destroy her entirely." Six months later, "they" had destroyed her entirely.—*Editors.*

Leipzig, July 7, 1916

My dear little Sonia,

Today it is hot and muggy, as it is most of the time in Leipzig.—The air here is very bad for me. This morning I sat for two hours in the park, near the pond, and read *A Man of Property.* It is a remarkable book. A little old lady sat down near me, glanced at the title and said to me with a smile: "That must be a good book; I like to read books too." Before starting to read I had of course reviewed all the trees and bushes in the park—and was pleased to find them all familiar silhouettes. In contrast, I find my relations with my fellow-being less and less satisfying. I think that soon I will withdraw from the world and become an anchorite, like Saint Anthony—minus the temptations. Be calm and happy.

Yours with all my heart.

ROSA

All my greetings to the children.*

Wronke, January 15, 1917

. . . Today I had a moment of bitterness. The whistle of the locomotive, at 3:19, told me of Mathilda's departure. For a few minutes I ran along the wall like a caged beast, doing the usual "walk" ten times in a row. My heart ached with grief that I too couldn't go away from here, far away. But it doesn't matter; my heart was given a rap directly and had to be still; it is already used to obeying like a well-trained dog. But enough about myself.

Sonitschka, do you still know what we had planned to do when the war was over? We were going to take a trip together to the South. And we will. I know you dream of going with me to Italy, for you the most beautiful country in the world. And I, I've planned to drag you to Corsica. That is even better than Italy. It makes one forget Europe, at least modern Europe. Imagine a heroic landscape, drawn in large strokes, with mountains and valleys sternly outlined. Above,

* This note is the only one of the collection not written from prison. Three days later, July 10, 1916, Rosa Luxemburg was arrested and recommitted to the prison from which she had just been freed. *Trans.*

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masses of bare rocks, dark grey, below rich olive groves, cherry laurels and century-old chestnut trees. And over all this, a calm such as might have preceded the creation of the world—no human voice, no bird's cry, only the noise of a little river winding somewhere between the stones, and up among the crevices of the rocks, the murmur of the wind—the same that swelled the sails of Ulysses' ship. And the people you meet are in complete harmony with the landscape. Suddenly, at the bend of a path, appears a caravan—the Corsicans still walk in line one behind the other, not in groups like our peasants. The caravan is usually preceded by a dog; then very slowly comes a goat, or a little donkey carrying bags full of chestnuts. This little donkey is followed by a big mule: on its back, astraddle, legs hanging straight down, a woman with a child in her arms. She holds herself straight, slim as a cypress, motionless; beside her, his carriage firm and peaceful, walks a man with a large beard. Both are silent. You would swear it was the Holy Family. And you meet scenes like this everywhere. It affected me each time, until I would gladly have knelt down as I always feel a desire to do before perfect beauty. In those countries the Bible and the life of ancient times are still real. Every night we would sleep in a different place, and would already be on the road when the sun rose. Does this mean anything to you? I would be so happy to be able to show you that world. . . .

Read a great deal; you must go forward intellectually too, and you can. You have kept all your freshness and your mind has remained flexible. I must stop now. Be happy and calm.

Yours, ROSA

Wronke, February 18, 1917

. . . For a long time nothing had shaken me as much as Martha's report of your visit to Karl and the impression it made on you to see him behind a grille. Why didn't you tell me about it? I have a special right to take part in your suffering, and would never belittle it. Moreover, what I read reminded me acutely of the moment when I saw my brothers and sisters again for the first time, ten years ago, in the fortress of Varsovia. There, they take you into a sort of double cage, with sides made of wire grille, that is into a little cage locked up in the middle of a larger one, and it is across the glint of two superimposed grilles that you have to talk. On top of this, the visit came on the day following a hunger strike that had lasted six days, and I was so weakened that the captain (commander of the fortress) was almost obliged to carry me into the parlor. I had to cling to the wire of the cage with both hands to keep from falling, which probably gave me even more the look of a wild beast in a zoo. The cage was in a rather

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dark corner of the room and my brother pressed his face against the wire. "Where are you?" he kept asking. And at the same time he was wiping from his glasses the tears that prevented his seeing. How happy I would be if I could be in the cage at Luckau now, and so spare Karl this trial!

Please give my best thanks to Pfemfert for having sent me the Galsworthy. I finished reading it yesterday and it gave me a great deal of pleasure. I like it, I admit, less than *A Man of Property,* not in spite of the fact, but *because* its social bias is more dominant. In a novel, I don't look for the point of view, but primarily for its value as art, and what shocks me from this angle in *Fraternity* is the fact that Galsworthy uses it too much to show off his wit. This will surprise you. But he belongs to the same type as Bernard Shaw or Oscar Wilde, a type that seems to be very widespread at the moment among English intellectuals: very intelligent and polished, but blasé, eyeing everything that happens in the world with amusement and scepticism. The shrewd and ironic remarks about his characters that Galsworthy makes with the utmost seriousness often make me burst out laughing. But just as really well bred and distinguished people never, or rarely, make fun of their circle, even if they are quite aware of its ridiculous side, a true artist should never take an ironic attitude toward his own creations. Don't misunderstand me, Sonitschka, I don't exclude great satire. For example, Gerhart Hauptmann's *Emmanuel V* is the most lashing satire on modern society written in the last hundred years. But in writing it Hauptmann himself does not sneer. At the end of his work, I can see his lips trembling, his eyes set and full of tears. Galsworthy, on the other hand, with all the witty remarks that he drops more or less everywhere, reminds me of a dinner companion who every time a new guest came into the room would slip a malicious remark in my ear.

Today is Sunday, Sunday again, the most deadly day for prisoners and people who are alone. I am sad, but hope with all my heart that you are not, nor Karl. Write to me soon and tell me when you will go away for a rest, and where.

I kiss you with all my heart and send my greetings to the children.

Yours, Rosa

Couldn't Pf. send me a good book again, perhaps something by Thomas Mann? I know nothing of his. One more request: the sun is beginning to blind me when I go out; would you be so kind as to send me a yard of very fine black dotted net? My thanks in advance.

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Wronke, April 19, 1917.

I WAS very pleased by the greeting in your card of yesterday, though it was sad. How I wish I could be near you now, to make you laugh as I used to—you remember—after Karl's arrest, when we both rather shocked the people in the Cafe Fürstenhof with our untimely outbursts of laughter.

What good times those were in spite of everything! Our daily automobile ride, every morning, Potsdamerplatz, then the trip to the prison across the Tiergarten all in flower, down Lehrter street with its tall trees, so peaceful; then on the way back the inevitable stop at the Fürstenhof and your equally inevitable visit to my house, at Sudende, where the splendor of May was over everything; the intimate hours that we passed in my kitchen, where you and Mimi waited patiently at the little white-covered table for the results of my culinary art. (Do you remember the string beans *à la Parisienne*? . . .) And added to all this I remember a long series of warm and brilliant days; it is really only in such weather that one feels the true joy of Spring. Afterwards, in the evening, my regular visits in your little room—I do so love to see you housekeeping; it suits you to perfection, standing beside the table, with your young girl's figure, and pouring tea. Finally toward midnight we took one another home, through the dark sweet-smelling streets. Do you remember that magnificent moonlit night at Sudende when I was walking home with you, and the gables of the houses, standing out in sharp angles against the infinitely soft blue background of the sky, reminded us of fortresses?

Sonitschka, I would like always to be like that when I am near you, to distract you, chatter or be silent with you, so that you wouldn't fall back into your dark and desperate thoughts. In your card you ask: "Why is everything like this?" Child that you are, it is life that is "like this," and always has been, and it is all indivisible: the suffering, the separations, the nostalgia. We must know how to take it as a whole, leaving out nothing, and to find order and beauty in all that it offers. At least, that is what I do. And not because of any wisdom that I might have acquired by reflection, but simply by virtue of my nature itself. I feel instinctively that this is the only way of taking life, and that is why I am truly happy, in any circumstances. I would not wish for anything to be wiped out of my life, and would want nothing of what is, or has been to be changed. If I could only bring you too to this conception of life! . . . .

Yours, ROSA

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Wronke, May 2, 1917

. . . Do you remember how one morning last April, at ten o'clock, I called you both on the telephone and asked you to come with me to the Botanical Gardens and hear the nightingale, that was giving a concert there? We crouched on rocks in a dense thicket, near a ravine where water was trickling slowly; after the nightingale's song we heard a monotonous and plaintive cry, that might be given something like this "Glee-glee-glee-gleec." I claimed it was some kind of marsh bird, and Karl thought I was right, but we couldn't find out what it was. Well! suddenly near here, a few days ago, I heard that same plaintive cry, early in the morning, so that my heart began to throb with impatience at the idea of knowing at last who it was that cried so. I couldn't rest until today, when I finally found it: it is not a marsh bird, it is the "wry-neck," a kind of magpie. It is hardly bigger than a sparrow, and the reason for its name is that when it is in danger it tries to appall its enemies with funny gestures and contortions of the head. It lives on nothing but ants, which it gathers on its sticky tongue like the ant-eating bear, and this is why the Spaniards call it "hormiguero"—the ant-eating bird. Moerike even wrote a nice little humorous poem on it, that Hugo Wolf set to music. I feel as if I had been given a present, now that I've found who the bird is with the plaintive voice. You might write Karl about it, it would please him.

What am I reading? Mostly books on natural sciences: geography, botany and zoology. Yesterday I read a book on the cause of the disappearance of song birds in Germany. The cultivation of forests, gardens, and land, becoming more and more widespread and systematic, takes away all their natural means of making their nests and looking for their food. Cultivation actually does do away little by little with hollow trees, fallow lands, brushwood, and withered leaves that have fallen on the ground. I felt quite gloomy reading about it. Not that I am worried about the singing of birds because of the pleasure it gives me, but it is the very idea of a silent and inevitable disappearance of those little defenseless beings that distresses me so that tears come to my eyes. It reminds me of a Russian book by Professor Siebert on the disappearance of the Red-Skins in North America, that I read when I was still in Zurich. The Red-Skins, just like the birds, are driven little by little from their domain by civilized man, and doomed to a cruel and silent death.

But perhaps it is a disease in me, to have such ardent emotions about everything. I feel sometimes as if I were not a real human being at all, but a bird, some kind of animal that has taken on a human face. Inside, I feel much more at home in a little scrap of garden, like here, or in a field, stretched out on the grass and surrounded by bum-

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ble-bees, than in a party congress. To you I can say all this, you won't suspect me immediately of being a traitor to socialism. You know of course that in spite of this I want to die at my post: in a street battle or a penitentiary. But in my inner conscience I belong more to the titmice than to my "comrades." And it is not that in nature, like so many politicians who have gone inwardly bankrupt, I find peace, a refuge. Quite the contrary, I find in nature, as among men, so much cruelty everywhere that it causes me a great deal of suffering. For example, the little episode that I am going to tell you refuses to leave my mind. It was last spring, I was coming back from a walk in the fields, on a quiet and abandoned road, when suddenly I noticed a little dark spot on the ground. I bent down and was a witness to this mute tragedy: a beetle was lying on his back, and, disabled, was defending himself with his legs while a whole heap of ants swarmed over him and were eating him alive. I shuddered, got out my handkerchief, and began chasing the little brutes away. They were rude and tenacious, so that I had to carry on a long struggle with them, and when I had finally succeeded in freeing the poor martyr and had laid him far away on the grass, two of his legs had already been eaten off. I rushed away, obsessed by the painful feeling that after all I had only done the beetle a rather doubtful kindness.

The long evenings are already here. How I used to love this time of day. At Sudende there were a great many blackbirds. Here, I see and hear none. All through the winter I fed a pair of them and now they have vanished. At Sudende at this hour of the evening I used to stroll in the streets; it was so beautiful when suddenly, in the last violet glimmer of day, the rose-coloured gas flames were lit, jumping timidly as if they felt ill at ease in the dusk. In the street, the vague silhouette of a housewife would rise up, bustling, or a servant would dash to the grocery or the bakery to get something. The shoemaker's children, friends of mine, used to go on playing outside in the dark, until a brisk voice called them back into the house. At that hour there was always a stray blackbird that couldn't find a resting-place, and that suddenly, like an ill-bred child, would let out a little cry or fly abruptly from one branch to another. And there I was, in the middle of the street, counting the first stars, and I had no desire to leave the soft air and the dusk, where day and night were melting softly into one another, and shut myself up in the house.

Sonitschka, I will write to you soon. Be calm and cheerful. Everything will be all right, for Karl too. Goodbye until the next letter.

I kiss you.

Yours, Rosa

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Wronke, May 23, 1917

. . . Sonitschka, you burst out bitterly on my long imprisonment, and write: "How is it possible that men can decide the fate of other men? Why do we go through all this?" Don't be angry with me, but reading your letter I couldn't help laughing with all my heart. In Dostoievski's *Brothers Karamazov* there is a Mme. Hohlakov who is always asking exactly the same questions, but before anyone tries to answer she leaps to another subject. Dear little bird, the entire history of human civilization, which according to even modest estimates is some twenty thousand years old, rests on the fact that men decide the fate of their neighbor, and this has deep roots in the material conditions of life. Only an evolution, brought about by a thousand convulsions, can change it. We are living, at the moment, one of the most tormented chapters of this evolution, and you—you ask to what end all this. "To what end?"—It is a question that has nothing to do with a conception of the totality of life and its forces. To what end are there titmice in this world? I don't know. But I rejoice that there are, and I find it a very sweet consolation to hear all of a sudden a hurried "tsi-tsi-bay," from far away, over the wall.

You also over-estimate my "serenity." It is unfortunate but true that my inner balance and my happiness are shaken by the slightest shadow passing over me, and then I suffer unspeakable pain. But at such times it is my nature to be silent. I do not exaggerate: in those moments I cannot speak a single word. For instance, only in the last few days, I was full of joy and happiness. I was delighting in the sun, when all of a sudden, last Monday, an icy storm struck me and at one blow turned my radiant joy to the deepest distress. I think that if at that moment my dearest dream had become embodied and stood before me, I could not have uttered a word, I could have done nothing but express my anguish in a silent look. It is true that I very rarely feel the temptation to talk: for whole weeks I don't hear the sound of my own voice; which is the reason for my heroic decision not to have my little kitten brought here. The little thing is used to gaiety and life, she likes me to sing and laugh and play hide-and-seek with her all over the apartment. Here, she would be utterly gloomy. So I will leave her with Mathilda. Mathilda is going to come and see me one of these days and I hope her visit will revive my spirits. Perhaps the Pentecost will be for me too a "happy holiday." Sonitschka, be gay and peaceful, all will end well, believe me. My cordial greetings to Karl.

I kiss you warmly.

Yours, Rosa

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Wronke, July 20, 1917

. . . As I was walking today, looking around and meditating, a line of Goethe kept forcing itself into my mind:

"Merlin the old, in his lumionus tomb,
Where I, a young man, spoke to him . . ."

You know the lines that follow. The poem, naturally, has nothing to do with what I was feeling or what was preoccupying me at the time: it was the music of the words and the mysterious charm of the poem that lulled me, bringing me calm. I don't know why it is that every time I feel upset or shaken, a beautiful poem, and especially Goethe, should act on me so profoundly. What I feel then is something almost physiological, as if with parched lips I were absorbing a delicious drink that refreshed me inwardly, bringing my soul and body back to health. I don't know the poem from the "East-West Divan" that you quote in your last letter. I'd be glad if you would copy it for me. And there is another small poem that is not in the little volume of Goethe that I have here, and that I've been wanting for some time, called "Blumengrüss." It is a little poem four or six lines long; I know it through a melody of Wolf's that is wonderfully beautiful, especially the end, which is something like this:

I gathered flowers, for you.
In a start of love
I pressed them a thousand times
To my heart.

Set to music, that has something so holy, so delicate, so chaste, it is as if someone were kneeling in silent adoration. But I no longer remember the words exactly and I would like to have them. . . .

Yours, ROSA

Mid-November, 1917

My dearest Sonitschka,

I hope soon to have a way of getting this letter to you. It has grieved me not to be able to write to you sooner, and I have missed the beloved habit of talking with you, at least by letter, more than I can say. But the few letters I had permission to write I owed to Hans D.* who was waiting for them. And now, it is all over. The last two letters I wrote to him were addressed to a dead man, and one has already been sent back to me. I can still not believe that this has happened. But it is better not to speak of it. I prefer to settle such things within myself, and when people beat all around the bush to break the

* Doctor Hans Dieffenbach, one of Rosa Luxemburg's best friends, who fell in the war. *Trans.*

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bad news and "console" one with their moaning, as N. did, it only irritates me. Why do those who are my nearest friends still know me so little, and hold me in such poor esteem? Don't they understand that the best and most delicate thing one can do in such a situation is to say simply and straightforwardly: he is dead. . . . That wounded me. But let's not say any more about it.

. . . How I regret the months and years that I pass here. How many lovely hours we could have lived together, in spite of all the frightful events that are going on now in the world! You know, Sonitschka, the longer it lasts and the more the infamy and atrociousness of things surpass all bounds and all dimensions, the quieter and more unshaken I become. I tell myself that we cannot apply moral standards to an element, a hurricane, a flood, an eclipse of the sun, but must accept them as something given and use them as objects of investigation and knowledge.

Certainly, from an objective point of view, these are the only possible courses of History, and we must follow History without losing sight of the main line. I have a feeling that all this mud that we are wading through, this huge lunatic asylum in which we live, could be transformed overnight, as by a magic wand, into their opposite, into something great and heroic, and that if the war lasts a few years more this change must take place . . . inexorably. Read *The Gods are Athirst* by Anatole France. It is a piece of work that I admire, above all because the author, with the intuition of a genius into all that is universally human, seems to be telling us: "Look, it is out of personalities like these, out of such daily pettiness, that at a given moment in History are born the most sublime deeds and the most gigantic events." One must accept everything that happens in society, just as in private life, calmly, one must see things in their larger meanings and take them with a smile. I firmly believe that at the end of the war everything will turn for the better, but it seems to me obvious that we must pass first through a period of the most dreadful human suffering.

By the way, what I have just written reminds me of something I want to tell you, because it seems to me touching and full of poetry. I read recently in a scientific work on the migrations of birds—a phenomenon that up to now has been rather enigmatic—that the following observation has been made on the subject: at the time of the great voyage toward the seas in the South, a hundred different kinds of birds, that are usually in a state of rabid war and devour each other reciprocally, cross the seas side by side in the most perfect understanding. Thus, in the great flocks of birds on the way to Egypt, blackening the sky as they rise into the air, you can see flying in absolute trust in the midst of birds of prey that ordinarily pursue them—hawks,

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eagles, falcons, owls—thousands of little song birds, such as swallows, wrens, nightingales. So it would seem that during the voyage there reigns a sort of tacit "God's truce." They are all straining toward a common goal and fall to the ground half dead of exhaustion, near the Nile, separating later according to their kinds and countries. And even better: it appears that on the long stretches of the voyage the big birds carry the little ones on their backs; thus great flocks of cranes have been seen carrying on their backs a lot of tiny birds that were chirping happily. Isn't it charming?

. . . The other day, as I was thumbing through an anthology of poems, gotten together without taste and as if by accident, I came across a poem by Hugo von Hoffmannsthal. As a rule I am not fond of his poetry. It seems too artificial, precious, and rather muddy; it's impossible for me to understand it. But I liked this poem very much, it made a great impression on me. I copied it. Perhaps you would like to read it.

I am plunged at the moment in geology. Perhaps you think of it as a dry science, but it is far from that. I am studying it feverishly and with real satisfaction, it broadens considerably one's intellectual horizon and does more than any other science to give a whole and harmonious view of nature; I would like to tell you a lot of things about it, but for that we would have to be able to talk, strolling together some morning in the fields at Sudende, or taking one another home several times in the evening, by moonlight. What are you reading? How far have you gotten in the *Lessing-Legende?* I want to know everything you are doing. Write to me right away, in the same way if possible, or otherwise in the official way without mentioning this letter. I am already counting the weeks until I will be able to see you here again. It will be soon after the new year, won't it? What does Karl say in his letters? When will you see him again? Give him my best greetings. I kiss you and press your hand, my dear, dear Sonitschka. Write soon and at length.

Yours, ROSA

Breslau, November 24, 1917

. . . You are wrong when you say I have a prejudice against modern poets. Fifteen years ago I read Dehmel with enthusiasm—his prose—a scene at the death-bed of a loved woman—my memory of it is not very clear, but I admired it. Even now I still know by heart Arno Holz' "Phantasus." I was carried away with enthusiasm for Johann Schlaf's "Spring," of the same period. Later, I turned away from these poets and came back to Goethe and Moerike. I don't

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understand Hoffmannsthal! as for George, I don't know his work. What is true is that I feel a certain distrust for their mastery of form and of the means of expression, and I'm afraid they lack a broad and noble vision of the world. Because of this contradiction, what they have to say rings hollow in my soul, and the most finished form ends by affecting me like a grimace. They do know usually how to convey marvelous states of mind, but man is not made only of states of mind. . . .

Yours, ROSA

Breslau, mid-December, 1917

. . . It is a year now that Karl has been imprisoned at Luckau. I have thought of it often during this month. And it is exactly a year since you came to see me at Wronke and brought me the nice little Christmas tree. . . . This time I had one bought, but it was hurt in handling and some of its branches are off,—no comparison with last year's.—I wonder how I am going to fasten on the eight little candles I have just gotten for it. This is my third Christmas in uniform. But don't take it tragically. I am calmer and happier than ever. Last night I stayed awake a long time—I can't go to sleep any more before one o'clock in the morning—and as we have to go to bed at ten, I have time to dream about a good many things in the dark. This is what I was thinking: how strange it is, I said to myself, that I am in a constant state of joy, a kind of drunkenness, and for no reason at all. I am stretched out in a dark cell, on a mattress hard as rock. Around me, a deathly silence reigns in the house, I might believe I was in my tomb. The lantern that burns all night in front of the prison casts a glittering reflection on the ceiling. From time to time you hear, from very far away, a train passing, or very near, under the window, the sentry coughing or taking a few slow, heavy steps to stretch his legs. The gravel crunches so desperately beneath his boots, it seems the breath, there in the damp, somber night, of everything desolate, everything hopeless in the world. I am stretched out there alone, wrapped in the dark folds of night, of weariness, of captivity, and nevertheless my heart beats with an incomprehensible inner joy, a joy new to me, as if I were walking in a field of flowers under a radiant sun. And in the shadow of my dungeon I smile at life, as if I possessed a magic secret by which everything wicked and sad could be transformed into light and happiness. I search in vain a reason for such joy, but find nothing and can only rest amazed. I think the secret is nothing else than life itself; the deep darkness of night is beautiful and soft as velvet if one knows how to see into it. And in the crunching of the wet gravel, under the slow, heavy steps of the sentry, life

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sings for those who know how to hear. At these moments I think of you, and wish that I could pass on to you that enchanted key, so that you too might feel at all times the beauty and joy in life, so that you too might live enchanted and walk through life as in a flowering field. Far be it from me to offer you imaginary joys and preach asceticism. What I wish for you is real and palpable joys. I would like to communicate to you too my own inexhaustible inner joy, so that I can be at peace thinking of you, and that you may pass through life in a mantle embroidered with stars, that will protect you from all that is mean, trivial and agonizing in existence.

. . . Sonitschka, do you know "The Bewitched Fork" by Platen? Could you send it or bring it to me? Karl once mentioned it, saying that he had read it at home. The poems of George are very beautiful, I remember now where the lines come from: "And in the rattling of russet ears! . . . " that you used to like to recite as we walked in the fields. Could you, when you have time, make me a copy of the "New Amadis," I am so fond of that poem—which I know like so many others through the music of Hugo Wolf—but I haven't it here. Are you still reading the *Lessing-Legende?* I have gone back to Lange's *History of Materialism,* which stimulates me and always refreshes my spirit. I wish you would read it some day.

Ah! Sonia dear, I have just had an acutely painful experience. In the courtyard where I take my walks there arrive every day wagons chock full of fodder-bags, worn-out soldiers' coats and shirts that are often blood-stained. . . . They unload them here, distribute them among the cells, where the prisoners mend them, then come and take them away. It was a few days ago, one of these wagons had just come into the court. But this time it was being hauled by water buffaloes instead of horses. It was the first time I had seen these animals close to. They have a broader and more powerful build than our oxen, their heads are flat and their horns exceedingly curved, which makes their skull resemble that of our sheep. They have an entirely black face and big soft eyes. The soldiers who drive the team say that these animals come from Roumania, and are trophies of war. . . . It seems that it was very hard to catch them—they were still running wild—and even harder, after the freedom they had enjoyed, to turn them into beasts of burden. They managed to break them in only by beating them, until they had learned down to the very depths of their flesh the full meaning of: *Vae victis!* . . . There are now more than a hundred and fifty of them in Breslau, and after the abundant pastures of Roumania, they have been reduced to the most scanty fodder, wholely inadequate rations. They are worked unsparingly, and dragging as they do all kinds of loads they will soon die off.—Well, a few days ago one

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of these wagons loaded with bags had just come into the courtyard. The load was so heavy and piled so high that the buffaloes couldn't get over the threshold of the entrance. The soldier that was with them began to hit them so violently with the thick end of his whip that the prison matron, shocked, asked him if he had no pity for animals. "Just like people have pity for us men!" he answered, a nasty smile on his lips, and he began beating harder than ever. . . . Finally the animals managed to get over the obstacle, but one of them was bleeding. Sonischka, the toughness of buffalo hide is proverbial, yet it had been torn.

While they were unloading the wagon the animals stood impassive and exhausted, and one of them, the one that was bleeding, kept looking sadly straight ahead. Its whole face and its big black eyes, so soft, had the expression of a child that has cried for a long time, a child that has been severely punished without knowing why, and that doesn't know what to do any more to escape from torment and brutality. I was in front of the team, and the wounded animal looked at me; the tears sprang to my eyes—they were "its" tears.— One could not tremble more painfully before the suffering of one's dearest brother than I did in my impotence before that silent pain. Lost forever, the vast delicious green meadows of Roumania. There, the way the sun shone, the breath of the wind, the singing of birds was all different, and the herdsman's call echoed far and melodious. Here, the horrible street, the stifling stable, the hay mixed with rotten straw, and above all these terrible unknown men and the blows, the blood flowing from the new wound . . . oh, my poor buffalo, my poor beloved brother, here we are both of us powerless and silent, both united in sorrow, weakness and nostalgia.

Meanwhile the women prisoners were jostling each other and bustling around the wagon. They unloaded the heavy sacks and dragged them into the house. As for the soldier, he had both hands thrust in his pockets and was striding around the court, whistling a vulgar tune. And all the splendor of the war passed before my eyes. . .

Write to me quickly, I kiss you, Sonitschka.

Yours, Rosa

Sonitschka, darling, be calm and serene in spite of everything. Life is made like this and must be taken as it is, bravely, head high and a smile on one's lips, against everyone and everything. . . .

Breslau, January 14, 1918

. . . I was delighted with the Rodin that you sent me for Christmas, and would have written to thank you right away if Mathilda

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hadn't told me that you were in Frankfort. What pleased me particularly was to confirm the extent of Rodin's feeling for nature, the religious respect that he shows for the least blade of grass growing in the fields. What a superior being he must have been: open, natural, flowing over with inner warmth and intelligence. He reminds me decidedly of Jaurés. Do you like Broodcoorens? Or do you know him yet? That novel made a great impression on me. The descriptions of landscape seem to me especially of great poetic power. Apparently Broodcoorens, like De Coster, believes that in the beautiful country of Flanders the sun rises and sets more splendidly than in any other country in the world. I have always noticed that the Flemish are literally in love with their country; they describe it in terms more applicable to a shining young fiancée than to a beautiful landscape. The dark and tragic ending draws on with the color of the imposing scenes of *Till Eulenspiegel.* I am thinking particularly of the destruction of the town hall. Don't you find that in their coloring these books are very reminiscent of Rembrandt? The general effect of darkness, and blended with that the entire gamut of gold and old gold, the terrifying realism of detail and yet the impression of mystery and legend that stands out from the whole?

I read in the *Berliner Tageblatt* that they are showing a new Titian at the Friedrich-Museum. Have you seen it yet? I must tell you frankly that Titian is not among my friends. He strikes me as having too much virtuosity, his pictures seem to me too labored and too cold.—Forgive me if I am committing a crime of lèse-majesté, but all I can do is to give rein to my impressions. That wouldn't prevent my being very happy to be able to go with you now to the Friedrich-Museum to pay homage to the new guest. Have you seen the Kaufmann bequest that is being so much talked about?

I am in the midst of various studies on Shakespeare, written between 1860 and 1880, in the period when the Shakespeare problem was still causing a good deal of debate in Germany. Could you get for me, from the Royal Library or the Reichstag: Klein, *History of Italian Drama;* Schack, *History of Dramatic Literature in Spain,* and the books by Gervinus and Ulrici on Shakespeare. What do you think of Shakespeare? Write to me soon.

I kiss you and press your hand affectionately. Be calm and serene in spite of everything! My dear Sonitschka, goodbye.

When will you come?

Sonitschka, would you do me a favor? Send some hyacinths to Mathilda for me. I'll pay you back when you come to see me.

Yours, Rosa

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Breslau, May 12, 1918.

. . . The profound affinity that binds me to all living nature "en dépit de l'humanité" takes forms that are almost unhealthy, a result, I suppose, of my nervous condition. Down below, in the courtyard, a pair of tufted larks have just had a little one, the three others probably died. And the little one has already learned to run very well. Perhaps you've noticed the way tufted larks run. They take tiny hurried steps, not at all like sparrows, which jump with both legs at once. The little one is beginning to fly too, but he still can't find enough food by himself, insects and little caterpillars, especially as it is cold these days. Every evening he appears in the courtyard in front of my window and lets out little sharp, plaintive cries. The two old ones answer immediately in a choked and worried voice: "Houeet, houeet," and they start running all over, looking desperately for food, in the dusk and the cold, and hurrying to cram it down his beak as soon as they find it. This goes on now every evening, around eight-thirty. And when I hear the little plaintive cries under the window, and see the worry and the anxious look of the two little parents, my heart aches. And yet I can do nothing for them, because tufted larks are very timid and fly away when you throw them crumbs of bread, behaving in this quite differently from pigeons and sparrows, which run after me like dogs. There is no use telling myself that all this is ridiculous and that I am not responsible for all the hungry tufted larks, just as I can't weep over the fate of all the buffaloes that are beaten—as they are here. For all my talk, it makes me really ill to see such things. For instance, if the starling that wears me out with his prattling from one day's end to the other, stops for a few days, I can't rest for fear something has happened to him, and I wait in torment for him to begin his insipid chattering again and reassure me that he is well. In this way, from the depth of my cell, I am bound by a thousand little imperceptible ties to thousands of creatures, big and small, taking to my heart all that concerns them, worrying and suffering for them, even reproaching myself about them. . . . You too are one of these birds, one of these creatures with which I live, from afar, in constant sympathy. I grieve with you that the years are passing irretrievably and we are not able truly to "live." But be brave and patient! We will live, and our lives will be filled with great events. At the moment, we still see only the disappearance of the old world, of which every day tears off another piece, and that is sweeping on at every instant toward new catastrophes. . . . And what is even stranger is that most people are not aware of it, and go on believing that there is firm ground under their feet. . . .

Yours, ROSA

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Breslau, October 18, 1918

Darling Sonitschka,

I wrote to you the day before yesterday. I have still received no answer to the telegram that I sent to the Chancellor. It may take a few days longer. But one thing certain is that my mind is at such a pitch that it is impossible for me now to receive my friends under supervision. I have put up with it patiently all these years, and under different circumstances could have gone on being patient much longer, but now that everything has changed from top to bottom I no longer have the strength to take that on myself. To be watched during my conversations, and to be unable to speak about what interests me so acutely, has become such a torment for me that I prefer to give up all visits until we can meet once more as free men.

In any case this can't last much longer. Since they have freed Dittmann and Kurt Eisner, they can't keep me in prison much longer, and Karl will be free soon too. So let's wait to see each other until we can do it in Berlin.

In the meanwhile, all my greetings.

Yours always, ROSA

Translated by ELEANOR CLARK

THE DEATH OF LUXEMBURG: A NEWSREEL

From the New York TIMES, January 18, 1919.

Berlin, Jan. 16 (Associated Press)—Dr. Karl Liebknecht was killed by soldiers yesterday while he was trying to escape from custody.

Rosa Luxemburg was beaten into insensibility by a mob and afterward was shot to death. . . .

Virtually the entire Berlin press regards the fate of Dr. Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg as having "something of divine justice in it," as the *Tageszeitung* phrases it. . . . The press in general deplores the lynching of Rosa Luxemburg, but declares that she fell a victim to the basest passions which she herself had awakened. . . .

The whole city is now swarming with soldiers, wearing steel helmets, carrying loaded rifles, and with hand grenades hanging on their belts. . . . Karl Kautsky, former Under Secretary in the Foreign Affairs Ministry of the Ebert Government . . . was arrested yesterday morning. He was liberated later.

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From the New York TIMES, January 19, 1919.

Berlin, Jan. 16 (via Copenhagen)—Dr. Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were arrested last night and while being transported to the Moabit Prison were thrashed by infuriated people and shot like mad dogs, the latter by an unknown man whose pistol may have saved her from a worse fate. . . . Their end, however cruel, will certainly do much for the restoration of peace and order. . . . Military Governor Noske is conducting a sharp investigation for the Social-Democratic government, but it seems that the soldiers' conduct was faultless in both cases.

From the New York WORLD, January 18, 1919.

Berlin, Jan. 17—I went to Gustav Noske, military governor of Berlin, and asked him how it was possible, with 40,000 troops in the city, that a crowd could get a prisoner away from the soldiers and kill her. Herr Noske replied: "Only a few soldiers were with each automobile, as such an attack was unexpected; the crowd, roused to intense anger by weeks of agitation by both the victims, were too much for the soldiers to handle." "Unfortunately," I said, "the incident is going to make a bad impression abroad . . . " "It is regrettable," Herr Noske replied, "but they are dead and we can now only make an inquiry." . . . "Do you expect it will lead to agitation again here?" "If it does," Gov. Noske replied, "we must put it down."

From the New York TIMES, January 25, 1919.

Amsterdam, Jan. 24—The body of Rosa Luxemburg, the Spartacist leader who was killed by a mob recently, was found yesterday in the Landwehr Canal, according to a report from Berlin. The body was terribly mutilated. The news is being kept secret for fear of anarchistic reprisals.

From The London TIMES, May 22, 1919.

Berlin, May 21—The leading facts leaked out only gradually, and there was little inclination among those in power to make a fuss over the end of a pair of rebels. But these rebels were the idols of the people, and their passionate sincerity had commended them to many prominent radicals whose support the Government required. And so after months of waiting, the Government decided that some sort of trial was necessary.

Herr Scheidemann remembered that the accused were soldiers and that the Peace had not been signed. The form of trial he selected was a court-martial, the court being appointed by the *Garde-Schutzen* Divi-

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sion to which the accused men belonged. . . . The adherents of the victims refused to take any part in the proceedings.

The accused were not brought to the dock in the usual way, but were introduced from the Judge's rooms. They arrived laughing and radiant, their breasts decorated with orders. Throughout the trial, they conducted themselves nonchalantly, one of them reading a newspaper when he felt bored, another eating sandwiches, a third playfully trying to get hold of some hand-bombs which one of his chums in uniform happened to have in his pocket. . . .

On the evening of the murders, soon after sunset, Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were taken to the Eden Hotel, where they spent some hours in charge of their guardians. There was . . . a good deal of conversation, some of it animated, in which the two victims discussed and defended their views. Orders were received that they were to be transferred to the Moabit Prison, and Liebknecht was taken to the back door of the hotel, where a military car was waiting. As they were leaving, one of the company cried out: "See that these swine do not reach the prison alive!"

As soon as Liebknecht got into the car, Private Runge aimed two blows at him with the butt of his rifle. One blow missed, the other cut his head open. Ober-Lieutenant von Pflugk-Hartung, the officer in charge, then got into the car. (He told the Court that he had taken quite a fancy to Liebknecht in the hotel, thought that for a Socialist he had interesting views and a good way of putting them.) He drew his revolver and told him that he would shoot him if he tried to escape. . . . Presently, in a dark corner of the Thiergarten, the car stopped . . . Liebknecht was shot and killed, and evidence was accepted as satisfactory that he must have been running away. Pflugk-Hartung was acquitted, with great applause. . . .

About an hour later, Rosa Luxemburg was taken to the front door of the hotel. . . . There, for some reason that was not inquired into, Private Runge was also waiting for her. As soon as she got into the car, he swung his rifle and clubbed her on the head. It was doubtful if his blows had actually proved fatal, and it was suggested that he was mentally defective. And so he was given two years' imprisonment.

Lieutenant Vogel, the officer in charge of this party, then got into the car, accompanied by two other officers. "Fraulein Luxemburg," he testified, "received two violent blows on the head from the butts of rifles of helmeted soldiers. She collapsed, and when we came to a bridge the thought came to us all to throw her body into the river." According to the other officers, however, she was shot through the head by Lieutenant Vogel. He testified that he threw the body into the river "to save the honor of the *Garde-Schutzen* Division." . . . He was given a sentence of two years and four months imprisonment. Already, however, his escape had been contrived. A man in officer's uniform drove up in a motor

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car to the prison, presented a forged warrant and released the prisoner.

The *Freiheit,* the organ of the Independent Socialists, is alone in denouncing the proceedings. The other newspapers think that in a case of this kind, "where political feelings are involved," perhaps the whole story has not been sifted, but they are satisfied that substantial justice has been done.

From a statement, signed "Hussar Otto Runge," printed in FREIHEIT, January 9, 1921.

On January 15, 1919, between seven and nine o'clock in the evening, I was stationed as sentry before the chief entrance of the Eden Hotel. Cavalryman Drager was with me. About nine o'clock there was a great to-do and excitement: it was rumored that Liebknecht and Luxemburg had been brought in. Several orders were at once given me by officers and sergeants, and the remark was dropped that these creatures must not be allowed to leave the hotel alive.

Concerning Liebknecht, I received strict orders from officers to knock the fellow down with the butt of my rifle. . . As for Frau Luxemburg, officers came to me and said: "I order you to see that Luxemburg does not leave the hotel alive. Mind you swallow that!" Lieutenant von Pflugk-Hartung made a note of my name and said to me: "First Lieutenant Vogel will send her straight to you; all you'll have to do is to strike hard." When Frau Luxemburg was being dragged into the motor, somebody jumped up behind just as it was driving off and sent a bullet into her head. I could see that very clearly, as I was only a short distance away. He then jumped down and re-entered the Eden Hotel from the Nurnberger Strasse. . . . Meanwhile the others had returned and were boasting: "We've done for Liebknecht nicely. A trick was played on him. We got him to try to escape." . . . Of Luxemburg it was said: "The old sow is already afloat."

Editorial from the New York TIMES, January 18, 1919.

LYNCH LAW IN BERLIN

Regrettable as is the manner of death, the work of private violence, not the law, that came to Dr. Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, it was to be expected, and does a summary, if irregular, justice to the fomenters of robbery, murder and anarchy. . . . These two leaders, the man violent but weak, the woman a termagant of the familiar revolutionary type, have perished miserably by the sword they drew. The defeat of the imitation Bolsheviks, the victory everywhere where elections have been held of the parties of order—Conservatives, Centrists, Democrats, Majority Social Democrats—are of the best omen for a representative moderate National Assembly, for a responsible and stable government. The Allies and the United States have hardly less interest than Germany itself in such an outcome.

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TO THE GERMAN COMMUNIST PARTY! (Radiogram)

On June thirteenth, you will carry to its last resting-place all that is mortal of Rosa Luxemburg. And once more the class-conscious workers of all nations will experience with you the bitterness of an irreparable loss. . . .

Comrades, your struggle is hard. But your victory is sure. After the night comes, inevitably, the morning; and the impotent and infamous regime of the traitorous "Social Democracy" will inevitably give way to the dictatorship of the heroic German proletariat.

Before the tomb of Rosa Luxemburg, this great founder of the Communist International, together with the proletarian vanguard of the entire world, we kneel.

Comradely greetings to the glorious Communist Party of Germany!

Eternal remembrance to Rosa Luxemburg!

The President of the Executive Committee of the Communist International:

G. ZINOVIEV

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THOMAS MANN: MYTH AND REASON

William Troy

LIKE NEARLY ALL the more important writers of his generation, Thomas Mann has turned finally to the frank and open exploitation of the myth. The direction that has taken him to it has been very generally that which has taken Yeats, Joyce, Valery and the others—the inveterate tendency of the literary imagination to deal with whole patterns of experience.

More particularly, it has been the late nineteenth century movement of protest against the devastating incursion of the scientific temper in the realm of literature and the arts. But Mann has come to the myth, not in the manner of the heirs of French symbolism, who reconstructed it gradually out of the tattered remnants and fragments still floating along the mainstream of literary tradition, but only after the most conscious and deliberate threshing-out of all the problems involved in giving adequate expression to our cultural predicament. His masters have been Dostoievski, Ibsen, Tolstoi, and Wagner; and like those hard-working titans of "the great and suffering nineteenth century" he has never been able to separate the problems of art from the problems of the historical mind. He has been at least as much influenced by philosophers like Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, by psychologists like Freud and Jung, as by any particular members of the literary tradition itself. If he has turned to an application of the "mythical-psychological" method described in his essay on Wagner, therefore, it is the result of a decision supported by reason and judgment, of a necessity imposed by his special view of the extremely responsible role that must be played by the artist at any time.

By some of his admirers, however, this decision has been undoubtedly greeted with an ill-concealed lack of enthusiasm, a certain vague sense of apprehension and discomfort. And indeed the contemporary mind is sufficiently justified in responding negatively even to the sound of the word myth, which has become synonymous with the idea of organized falsehood. Some of the worst tendencies in every department of modern life and thought derive their impetus and

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authority from one or another of the old myths of the past surviving into the present. We live in an age whose atmosphere has become so charged with the sulphurous fumes of conflicting mythologies that reason has less and less air in which to respire. And for Mann, who has been above all the spokesman of a more *enlightened* humanity, to invite us back into the dark and tortuous regions of Hebrew myth, cannot but seem to some people a kind of spiritual and intellectual backsliding.

But the purpose of this essay is to suggest that rather than being inconsistent with his long devotion to the cause of reason, Mann's turning to the myth in his new work represents a synthesis between reason and experience that is full of the highest possibilities for our time. Moreover, it is to point out that the processes involved in this synthesis have been implicit in his work almost from the beginning. For even the most casual reading of his earlier novels and tales must reveal to what extent the images and symbols underlying or appearing alongside the analytical and discursive exposition are capable of being ordered according to the immemorial pattern of the myth. It is as if we are confronted with two orders of meaning, with their corresponding structures—the logical and the symbolical, and as if the dialectic interplay between the two constitutes his work as a whole.

I

From the beginning Mann has discovered his hero in that lonely and neglected figure, that "marked man," that black sheep of modern bourgeois society to which he has referred as the artist-type. In those carbolic little tales that he wrote around the age of twenty, the profound social ostracism of the type is frequently indicated through the device of symbolical deformity. Johannes Friedemann is humpbacked, Tobia Mindernickel's exterior is "provoking to laughter," Christian Jacoby is collosally fat, and Praisegod Piepsam's face is a huge "funereal joke." This is the fatality which in the case of every one of them leads to some terrible and overwhelming humiliation. Little Herr Friedemann is literally kicked back to reality by the beautiful woman to whom he makes love; poor Jacoby, in "Little Lizzy," forced to dress up in baby's clothes and sing a tune composed by his wife's lover, dies of mortification. As for Mindernickel and Piepsam, children jeer at them as they pass down the street. These stories reek of the sort of *fin de siècle* sadism and masochism that Mario Praz has treated in *The Romantic Agony*. For all their precocious urbanity and studied objectivity they are the products of an imagination which has not yet attained maturity, which is writing at the level of the abyss. Their characters are simply *Doppelgänger* for the young writer

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himself, who appears in less indirect guise in other and less interesting stories of the same period. In "Disillusionment" the narrator discovers in the unknown man of thirty whom he meets on the Piazza di San Marco a similar projection of what he will become a few years later. This stranger, who is also a prefiguration of the stranger whom Aschenbach is to encounter on his walk by the cemetery, confesses that his tormented yearning for a higher reality has led only to the conclusion that he is "alone, unhappy, and a little queer." Like the narrator in "The Dilettante" and the novelist Detlef in "The Hungry," he has had a disastrous love-affair with a daughter of the bourgeoisie—the uniform pattern of frustration in all the stories. The "dilettante" comes to see himself as "a beggar, a poor wretch standing at a jeweler's window," and Detlef actually exchanges a glance of mutual understanding with a beggar outside an opera house.

Physical deformity, in the case of Johannes Friedemann and Christian Jacoby, has been but the symbolical equivalent of that same deviation from the norm, of that same fatality of loneliness which separates the artist from the rest of the bourgeois world. The artist's excessive sensibility is a malformation that can only be hideous to the "children of light." Through such an oblique method of presentation the early Mann makes us realize, in a peculiarly compelling fashion, the intensity of his problem. It is a method comparable to that of the French Impressionist and post-Impressionist painters, who, as Meyer Schapiro has suggested, were in the habit of representing themselves as bullfighters, jockeys, acrobats, or dancers—all cynical or wistful servants of a public from which they are forever separated as by some impassable barrier. Later on, in the wandering street-singer of *Death in Venice* and in the sinister hypnotist of *Mario and the Magician* Mann, too, will give us examples of the artist as despised and secretly despising entertainer.

From the malformed to the diseased, from the ugly duckling to the pathological case, is not such a great transition, and exactly this is accomplished in *Buddenbrooks*. But now for the first time it is hinted that deformity and disease are to be regarded not so much as deviations from a norm as potentialities inherent in any healthy body. Beginning as a rather straightforward chronicle novel in the Zola manner, tracing the vicissitudes of a more or less typical German middle class family through the generations, this book seems to transform itself before our eyes, and almost against its author's will into another treatment of the theme that had occupied him in his very earliest stories. The great difference is that artist and bourgeois are no longer romantically pitted against each other as belonging to two eternally separate and absolute orders of existence, but the former is seen as an issue of the slow and inevitable deterioration of function

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in the latter. In other words, Mann turns to an etiology of the case whose symptoms he has either recorded analytically or demonstrated in his Gallery of Horrors. The health of the Buddenbrooks, their material and social well-being, with all that this had entailed of inner psychological stability for the individual members of the tribe, deteriorates in exact proportion to the development and refinement of their sensibility. Not until the third generation, it is true, do the evidences of this twofold process of growth and decay begin to show themselves in character and action. But it becomes distinct the moment that Gotthold, retracing the ancient pattern of Ishmael and Isaac, abandons his patrimony to his younger brother for the sake of a life of aimless romantic wandering. And the sister Antonie betrays all that dangerous restlessness of the spirit in its search for an adequate resting-place that can only lead to disgrace and death. As for Thomas Buddenbrooks himself, the inheritor of the family "blessing" in every sense of the word, it must always be a question whether it was the reading of Schopenhauer in the summer-house or the defection of his heart that brought about his too early death, together with the utter destruction of the business. He has already reinforced the foreign virus in the Buddenbrooks bloodstream through his marriage with the dark, exotic, and music-loving Gerda. And through Gerda the whole malady that is creeping in upon the Buddenbrooks takes on a more definite form through its identification with art. Despite his father's foreboding protestations, little Hanno cannot help but acquire that mastery of the piano which will enable him to improvise a swan-song for his race. The unconscious generations have labored only to bring forth this sick child, this incipient artist of the keyboard, this precocious scoffer, whose death is made an irrefutable rejection of everything for which they had stood. For *Buddenbrooks* is not only a study in the genesis of the bourgeois artist-type; it is also a definitive evaluation of bourgeois society as a whole. Nothing in modern literature gives us a more concentrated image of that society's will-to-death than little Hanno's refusal, at the height of his fever, to hear "the clear, fresh, mocking summons" of life. "But if he shudders when he hears life's voice, if the memory of that vanished scene and the sound of that lusty summons make him shake his head, make him put out his hand to ward it off as he flies forward in the way of escape that has opened to him—then it is clear that the patient will die."

Love, disease, and death—these themes are already clearly identified with the notion of art in Mann's first long book. Far from being a Balzacian parabola of monomaniac passions or a Zolaesque diagram of socio-economic forces, *Buddenbrooks* traces the downward-moving spiral process by which beauty is produced only at the cost of all the "normal" values, by which the powers of light and darkness are kept

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in a sterile equilibrium, and which achieves its only possible termination in death. As an artist the young Mann is able to transcend the last of these conclusions through the act of the imagination by which he makes the separate processes of the conflict his material and their interplay his form. Art is still able to rise above death. It is able to rise above death, with which it is nevertheless inextricably bound up, through the intellect that has been able to perceive such relationships in the first place. Through the intellect the artist can still enjoy that sensation of an active and everchanging reality that rises from the recognition of the anomaly of his own rôle. Such a motive-power is summed up in the complaint of Tonio Kröger a few years later, "I stand between two worlds. I am at home in neither, and I suffer in consequence. You artists call me a *bourgeois,* and the *bourgeois* try to arrest me."

For there must be an inescapable ambiguity in a writer who will neither go the whole road to the graveyard of the artist *pur sang* nor treat the bourgeois with the proper degree of respect. Tonio Kröger is a little Hanno who has enough conviction of the paradox of his existence to make it also a sufficient reason. With all that longing for "the bliss of the commonplace" that had characterized the first desperate examples of the type, he is able to carry on through the sheer momentum of the conflict. Here again "the blond and the blue-eyed" are on the side of the bourgeois, the pathetic and grotesque on the side of the artist, but the activity of intellect necessary to play the one against the other is able to generate a sufficient self-perpetuating warmth. And is there not also the hope of some far-off resolution in the letter which Tonio writes to his authentically Bohemian friend, especially in the reference to "those shadows of human figures who beckon me to weave spells to redeem them: tragic and laughable figures, and some that are both together?" The desire to redeem is one with the desire to love, and in the possibility of love lies Tonio's own sole promise of redemption.

Of love there is indeed very little in *Tristan,* the other important story of the same period, in which Mann appears to have relieved himself once and for all of the contempt and disgust that he had come to feel toward the unregenerate artist-type. Hysteria takes the place of resolution. The ridicule heaped on the vain, pompous and altogether egoistic novelist-hero, who has taken up residence in a sanitarium for the sake of its aesthetic atmosphere, is as unequivocal as the mirthful squeals with which the bourgeois infant in the perambulator greets the sight of his face. But in *Death in Vence,* published in 1911, which deals with a quite different specimen of the artist-type, Mann makes his first important step toward a complete resolution of his problem.

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At the moment at which this story appeared the so-called "musicalization" of literature had already proceeded to such a point that Julien Benda, a few years later, was forced to direct against it his famous attack in *Belphegor*. More and more writers were taking Verlaine's dictum *De la musique avant toute chose* quite literally, and the movement was dissipating in the diffuse "tone-poems" of Verhaeren and the crepuscular fluidities of the Maeterlinckian drama. Any amount of vague and undefinable feeling was being purveyed in the name of Music. But the direction that this movement had taken was not at all what Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Wagner had intended in their exaltation of music above all the other arts. For Schopenhauer the patterns of music corresponded to the irreducible yearnings of the human will in its effort to express itself in nature, and in this sense of being freest from any specific contentual experience music was to be regarded as the purest of the art-forms. But music has its own content in sound, and the mistake of the Symbolists had been to confuse its merely quantiative medium with the more complex medium of words. In appropriating the Wagnerian *leitmotiv*, for example, the Symbolists were not introducing a new literary device, as they thought, but simply returning to those archetypal patterns from which later study has shown that both literature and music derive their common origin. What is the *leitmotiv* but the musical equivalent of a symbol, or a symbol but the verbal equivalent of a *leitmotiv?* It is not quite true, as Benda argued, that the difference between the two arts is one of intellectual consciousness, for literature insofar as it is literature and not something else is no more capable of exact logical transcription than music. The meaning in both is something implicit in the whole pattern into which the separate motifs or symbols are made to fall. If the Wagnerian influence on 19th century writing was so baneful in its effects, as Mann himself has shown, it was because Wagner never managed to accomplish such a pattern in his own music-dramas; they dissolved in the same romantic *Sehnsucht* out of which they were born. But in his strict adherence to the mythical subject he enables us not only to measure the extent of his failure but to recognize the imponderable nature of the relationship between music and literature. *Death in Venice* has been submitted to more than one analysis in terms of musical themes and motifs. And there is no reason why it shold not also be submitted to a similar analysis in terms of color or smell. But all these separate modes of analysis are included or subsumed in that more general type of analysis that we must bring to the proper understanding of the myth.

For what emerges through the highly civilized modern tone and hushed rhetoric of this remarkable story but the fundamental pattern

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of the ancient initiation rite? Freud had already written of the adolescent crisis in terms of the heroic struggle of the individual for self-survival; and Jung, following Lévy-Bruhl and Durkheim, had explained the manner in which this is institutionalized in the primitive *rites de passage*. The novelist in Mann's story is someone who has come to his initiation too late, and the rite must be played out on the silent plane of the consciousness. For many years, nature in Aschenbach had been "kept quiet," like the cholera plague later on in Venice, lest it disturb the even flow of his reputation, the steady accumulation of honors, the adoption of his books as texts in the schools. Too early in life had he publicly renounced "all sympathy with the abyss," and devoted himself to the responsibilities of his position. Not until he has reached the age of fifty does the sight of a coarse and vaguely foreign-looking face during a walk by a cemetery stir up in him the desire for travel and relaxation. But this is enough to start him on his "journey by water" (which young Joseph is to reënact in the monkeyland of Egypt) to the forbidden land, to the city that is the meeting-place between the East and the West, to the classic Venice of the North German imagination. At once it becomes evident that he could never have forsworn the abyss, because he has never known it, or he would not be so shocked and disgusted by his observations on the way. And no sooner in Venice than he feels himself completely at the mercy of the rather sinister, animal-like gondolier who rows him to his hotel without waiting to be paid. The man was without a license, it appears, and this is the first distinct note of the illicit. It is the illicit, however, that strikes him full in the face next day when he sees the boy Tadzio for the first time in the hotel waiting-room. Then begins his long season of anguish and humiliation in the underworld of his own unsuspected impulses and desires, which become subtly identified with the sights and the sounds and especially the smells of the corrupt city. For nature takes revenge on Aschenbach by asserting herself through one of her most anti-social manifestations; he becomes the victim, in Freudian terms, of an infantile regression. But homosexuality, which Freud explains as a type of psychological narcissism, is also emblematic of the immaturity of an artist whose images have never been more than the reflexes of his own unchecked idealism. As the earlier denizens of the abyss had been subject to the hallucinations of the sensibility, so that we never know whether the stranger in "Disillusionment" or the beautiful lady in "The Wardrobe" were real persons or mere dreams, the noble Aschenbach is the victim of the mind's own tendency to project images of its unappeasable love of perfection. Both tendencies are fatal to mature creation; both lead to a reprehensible sterility. (It is to this aspect of the homosexual passion that Mann directs his attention in his curious discussion of the subject in Count Keyserling's

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Book of Marriage.) So the aging novelist is made to pursue through the labyrinthine streets of Venice what is really only the sterile projection of his mind in its effort to create form out of its own substance, to breed beauty and spirit out of the mere ideas of these things. Tadzio is compacted half of material reality, half of a tired and wordy Platonism. For Aschenbach he is the materialization of that ideal perfection of form which he had cultivated all his life, so that he is the image of Narcissus in the pool. And the tantalizing smile that Tadzio returns him several times throughout the story is also the Narcissus-smile of recognition. As an object of desire, however, he can only be frustrating, absurd, impossible, the mere dream of him as such leading his worshipper straight into the depths of the abyss.

Through the suffering and humiliation of the pit, the initiate in the rites not only learns the horrors involved in the full experience of living but also acquires the grace and strength that will enable him to endure them. He sloughs off the old arrogant childish self that had made the world seem like a mirror of his own emotions and emerges as a mature and responsible member of the tribe. A real dialectic process occurs by which the old individual self is reborn on the higher plane of the moral and social. And so Aschenbach, that tardy initiate, already sickening from the poisoned berries that he has eaten to allay his thirst, is made to go for a last time to the beach to catch a glimpse of Tadzio. An abandoned camera on a tripod records the scene: Tadzio, playing with some of his friends, is suddenly downed, his face pressed into the sand, and when he is freed he walks sullenly away. At that instant occurs a profound transformation in Aschenbach's vision of him: he is no longer an object of desire, but an object of contemplation. In the first place, his little exhibition of outraged pride has made him a human being. Now that Aschenbach himself has tasted this emotion to the full he is no longer able to confuse reality with the reflections of his own overdeveloped aesthetic sensibility. Tadzio is no less beautiful in his eyes, but now the beauty "flashes off" the organism as a whole, as from the bird in Hopkins' sonnet, and it is impossible to distinguish between the physical and the spiritual in the perfect harmony of their functioning. The recognition that the boy's superior physical charms have been intimately bound up with a superior moral nature enables Aschenbach to discover in him a completed symbol of his own predicament. The tussle between Tadzio and the boy of "coarser nature" on the beach is the allegorical correspondence of the terrible struggle that he has just been through in his private abyss. Morally, Tadzio supplies a living and breathing example of that working-alliance between matter and spirit, feeling and reason, "knowledge of the abyss" and intoxication with form which the artist must effect if he is to preserve his own

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identity. And, finally, there is the analogical meaning of the tale. Like Tadzio, "tracing figures in the wet sand with one toe," Aschenbach must transcend his experience in a period of renewed artistic creativeness: "It seemed to him the pale and lovely Summoner out there smiled at him and beckoned; as though, with the hand he lifted from his hip, he pointed outward as he hovered on before into an immensity of richest expectation."

Such a reading of this story is not unlike the procedure adopted by those students of the Grail legends who are forced to penetrate beneath the layers of social presuppositions implicit in their tone and narrative method to the underlying pattern described by the symbols. It enables us to realize to what an extent Mann identified the artist with the hero even in his earliest work, to what extent he made the problem of the artist the problem of society, and how this problem was to be solved only by a clear-minded approach to the myth. Aschenbach suffers in private all the agony involved in performing the rôle of scapegoat for a schizophrenic society; his initiation has come too late for his own regeneration; but his creator is to take us well into that distance indicated by "the pale and lovely Summoner."*

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* (The concluding part of Mr. Troy's essay will appear in the July number.)

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TWO ENGLISH POETS

COUNTRY WEEK-END

And here at twilight the day dies easily; nothing
Comes between lover and lover: on them and us
The shadows fall
Who do not belong. And in the house, angry, wait
The defeated and disillusioned ghosts repeating: "This
We should never have imagined."

Anything is possible inside four walls; though here
There will be no explosion at three o'clock and only friendly
Visitors call,
The tourists pass on motor-bikes, the passionate
And urgently shy, goggled, disguised as fish,
Rest and look, go away.

And here where much too happily the days end
And the obvious is obvious and the truthful
Is perhaps true
And the village green with whippets is as real as a dream; where
People like any others have embraced, thinking: "Erased
Is the puerile impossible past,"

Here there is nothing to be done, in this place
Much too genuine is the agricultural hand:
The ghosts now
Move gentlemanly as swans through the empty night.
They will not disturb. Nothing will disturb. Here everything
Is pleasantly wrong.

Finchingfield, Essex

MUSICAL BOX POEM

The automatic evening of my hand
Pushes night over the rising sky,
And night is a musical box, I am
Most caught by this delicious evening's why;
My musical night tinkles and plays
All my days' tune over my daylong days.

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My musical box night is the absurd
And terrible anthem that I play to Time.
Confusion in the vivid core
Invigorates these no-wise lovely arms.
My tears fall in musical wells,
I shake combs from my hair like bells.

The box is abstract, dark and without choice,
The box I compass in a talking head.
No evening is as dark as I could wish
Who wear my music as an inlaid wood,
Who see a music as the night goes wide
Compass the rising tide.

Where is that demon who is born of night,
The gull of death without his crying talons?
His hurdy gurdy over years of light
Wheels with its taut embracing flexible columns.
He is the X to whom I play the drums
Through dutiful quiet rooms.

He is the winding music that I choose,
My ravelled sleeve, my polyphonic wrongs,
The black to-morrow that I never play;
Music in death and man as I go round
Is hidden in the pier or a sea wind
Will bear it idly home.

The music time, as fabulous as love,
Took once tempestuous the deathrope's slack,
Music, the singleton of noise, said how
God saved me kindly from the tall trees' fall,
Told how the deathsailed ship in sight of land
Broke on the island rock,

And what was timely in the singing voice
Rose from the sea, took people for its friends,
And worshipped idols during many years;
Music said how the physiologue ran,
That man of terror, through a pathless sea,
To nothing that we recognize as ours.

JULIAN SYMONS

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THE AUTUMN WORLD

Our world is ruinous and falls about us
like the autumn world, whose leaves bewilder.
Where will the slipshod winds, down empty streets,
dishevelled, scatter us, to rot
under some structure of concrete and strong iron?

In autumn mazery so much entangled,
confused with print and dreams our hasty
lives driven by huge winds will leave no trace
beyond the impermanent corrosion of leaves
choking stone fountains in deserted gardens,

and brimming quiet-circled winter ponds.
This century blown against the future's walls
by war and hunger has only oblivion,
in winter's weather stamped into the soil
like the driven leaves, the driven leaves.

D. S. SAVAGE

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KARL MARX: A PROLET-PLAY

(Reported to have been written for the WPA theater by a member of the League of American Writers.)

THE von Westphalens' garden in Trier, Germany. Young Karl Marx comes in, a fine manly lad of fifteen.

KARL MARX (*calling up to a window on the second floor of the house*). Comrade Jenny! Oh, Comrade Jenny!

JENNY VON WESTPHALEN (*putting her head out the window*). Hello, Karl: I'm coming right down.

FERDINAND LASSALLE *skulks in, a boy of about Marx's age. He wears spectacles, a mustache and a pointed beard, and has a mane of black hair, which stands up on his head.*

LASSALLE. One moment, Comrade Marx: let me give you a word of warning. Your attentions to Jenny von Westphalen are beginning to verge on class betrayal. Remember that Fraülein von Westphalen belongs to the feudal nobility: your solidarity is with the workers!

MARX. No, Comrade Lassalle: you are mistaken. The correct line is a popular front which will take in the liberal nobility as well as the militant working-class. You have been misled into a left deviation.

Jenny appears from the house. Lassalle slinks away, with a look of hate.

JENNY. I don't like that Lassalle boy hanging around here. Papa says he is a potential fascist.

MARX. Oh, Ferdinand is a good comrade, I think. Let us give him the benefit of the doubt.

JENNY. He tried to flirt with me at the rally last week, and I can tell that he's peeved with me now because I showed that I wasn't interested. And now he is chasing after that reactionary, Sophie Hatzfeldt.

MARX. Hm: not very consistent!—And I don't like his trying to cut me out.

JENNY. Nobody could do that, Comrade Karl!

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MARX. Have you thought about what I asked you? Will you share my struggles and exile?

JENNY. I will always be your comrade, Karl.

He embraces her.

MARX. But we must not yield to romantic escapism. There is a meeting of the fraction at five, and we must not weaken the discipline by lateness.

* * *

Bonn University, Germany. Office of Professor Hegel. Marx and Engels come in arm and arm, in the costume of German students. They are fine vigorous laughing young fellows. They find Bruno Bauer, a young professor, standing looking out the window.

MARX. Why, Bruno, old boy!—why so gloomy? You ought to be mustering all your forces to liberate Germany from the reactionary feudal government of Friedrich Wilhelm IV!

BRUNO BAUER. Old Hegel has violated my academic freedom. He hates me on account of my bold championship of the Young Hegelian League, which was named after him but which he now repudiates. He has summoned me to dismiss me from my chair; and I hear that he is going to put in my place a lackey of the interests named Sidney Cook, who teaches a mishmash of Dialectic and Pragmatism.

MARX. How shameful! We must unmask old Hegel!

Hegel enters. He wears a mask, but his identity is betrayed by his slight stooping figure, his spectacles, his white mustache, and a small tuft of hair that stands up at the back of his head.

HEGEL (*unctuously, rubbing his hands*). Well, well, young men: what a beautiful sunny morning! We must believe in the Dialectic on a fine sunny morning like this!

MARX. Haven't you been letting the Dialectic get a bit rusty lately, Professor? It has been lying on your desk for months without your even taking it out of its case!

ENGELS. Everybody knows that you are teaching nothing but Instrumentalism, and that your so-called educational methods are merely the result of intellectual disorientation arising from your subservience to the authorities!

HEGEL (*raging*). I will suppress your right of student opinion!

MARX AND ENGELS. Ha ha!

Joyously they unmask him and stand him on his head.

MARX (*snatching the Dialectic from the desk*). Ours is the Dialectic now!—Come, Bruno: you have not joined the YHL, although you have defended it so courageously. You must get your card today!

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The three march out arm in arm, singing, "Hold the fort, for we are coming!"

* * *

The Revolution of 1848: just behind the barricaaes. Shots and sounds of fighting. Enter Engels, Lassalle and Proudhon. Engels has a bloody bandage around his head.

ENGELS. Phew! that's hot work! Now that we've joined forces with the liberal bourgeoisie to overthrow the feudal monarchy, we must bring pressure on the former to grant our demands.

Marx emerges from the doorway of a house.

MARX. What, Friedrich: still fighting in the streets? Don't you know that we must turn the intellectual weapons which we have acquired through our bourgeois education against the institutions of our own class?

LASSALLE. Intellectual weapons! What we need is a *coup d'état!*

MARX. Always a careerist, Comrade Lassalle! That way lies counter-revolution.

PROUDHON. Why can't we just have coöperatives, so that we won't have to do any more fighting?

MARX. That's the poverty of your philosophy, Proudhon. We must not shrink from violence to achieve our ends. But, Friedrich, your place is there with me (*pointing toward the house where he has been working*). Remember we have the Dialectic in our keeping. Have you drafted the Communist Manifesto?

ENGELS (*taking a manuscript from his pocket*). What do you think of this for an opening? "A specter is haunting Europe—the specter of Communism."

MARX. No, Friedrich: that will never do. That's not the way to put it. Make it: "A specter is haunting Europe—the specter of Democracy."

* * *

A congress of the Workers' International. Lassalle and Bakunin, looking furtively about them, slip into the empty hall.

BAKUNIN. I've got the bomb ready and will stand right here by the door. When Marx comes in, I'll assassinate him.

LASSALLE. There's nothing like individual terrorism!

The delegates begin to gather, Bruno Bauer and Proudhon among them.

BRUNO BAUER (*to Proudhon*). They say that Comrade Marx is going to announce an important change of policy.

Marx and Engels come in, Engels with his lifelong companion, Mary Burns.

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PROUDHON (*with a lewd French leer*). And how is the *petite mademoiselle?*

MARY BURNS. Faith, Misther Proudhon, us Irish may have been the bribed tools of British imperialism once, but today we're in the vanguard of the proletariat, an' I'll thank ye to keep a civil tongue in yer head an' not be callin' me anny of those filthy French names!

ENGELS. You must be careful, Comrade Marx: remember that the mad dogs of reaction are trailing you.

MARY BURNS. Jesus, Mary and Joseph! There's that spalpeen Lassalle again!

ENGELS. How many times must I tell you, Mary, that religion is the opium of the people?

MARX. No, Friedrich: that's what I said when I was young, but today we must not exclude the possibility of a broad popular front with the Vatican.

LASSALLE (*to Bakunin*). Why don't you throw the bomb?

BAKUNIN. That will always be unexplained.

ENGELS (*addressing the audience*). Our beloved leader, Comrade Marx, will announce a new directive.

Prolonged applause. Marx appears on the platform. Prolonged applause and cheering.

MARX. Comrades, we must combat the menace of Bourbonism, which is threatening Europe today. We must support the people of France under the progressive leadership of Napoleon III in their struggle against monarchism in Italy.

ENGELS. Long live the Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte!

Prolonged applause and tumultuous cheering.

MARX. We must stamp out the gangsters of Bourbonism!—and for this we have our weapon ever-ready, the spearhead of the proletariat : the Marxist-Hegelist Dialectic! (*He opens the leather case and takes out the Dialectic, which is in the form of a gleaming revolver. He points it at Bruno Bauer.*) Have you, Bruno Bauer, been in contact with Bourbon agents?

BRUNO BAUER. I stewed in my own juice and took orders from the Duc de Guise in the Hotel Adlon in Paris.

MARX (*shoots him with the Dialectic, then turns it on Proudhon*). And you, M. Proudhon?

PROUDHON. I conspired to give Alsace-Lorraine to the Italians in return for aid against Louis Bonaparte and our leader, Comrade Marx.

Marx shoots him.

MARX (*to Bakunin*). And you!

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BAKUNIN. I promised the traitor Lassalle to assassinate you.

MARX. And where is Lassalle, the Bourbonist bandit?

BAKUNIN. He has fled the country, the reptile.

MARX (*shooting Bakunin*). Good: he may live to take a treacherous part in some even more sensational conspiracy.

ENGELS (*snatching the Dialectic from Marx*). I, too, have been disloyal to Comrade Marx! I take full responsibility for everything! I did not know about the plot and failed to prevent it. (*He shoots Mary Burns and himself.*)

MARX. And now we may tear up the Gotha Program prepared by the mad wolf Lassalle and poisoned with the counter-revolutionary demand for equal pay for officials and workers. Forward to socialist inequality and democracy!

Marx takes off his beard and reveals the smiling face of Comrade Stalin.

CURTAIN

EDMUND WILSON

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THEATER CHRONICLE

NEW SETS FOR THE OLD HOUSE

If you want to make a rational structure of *Heartbreak House* you can say that it is a sort of layer cake of meanings. The top layer is a play about a houseful of unhappy, articulate, rudderless English people of the upper middle class who, while attempting to straighten out their sex relations, are surprised by the air raid of a foreign power. The second layer is an allegory of the moral and political bankruptcy of the European leisure class. The mad but profound old sea captain signifies the spirit of Old England. The captain's two daughters exemplify the class that was born to govern but that abdicated its responsibility in favor of the new forces of finance capitalism, represented by the practical business man. In the one daughter we see the upper-class escape into the strong-arm philistinism of colonial government; in the other, the retreat into the dream world of dilettante cultivation. The air raid is the war which that class has unwittingly prepared for its own destruction. The third layer is a dramatic exposition of the protean character of human nature. It is this third layer on which the play rests; yet it is a foundation neither fixed nor solid, and it keeps the other elements, superimposed upon it, in a kind of dizzying perpetual motion.

None of the characters can keep his shape; none is consistent The captain is wise, but he is also crazy; he is the only strong person on the stage, but he gets his strength from rum. The powerful capitalist has no capital; he lives on travelling expenses and commissions. He is a hard bargainer, but his heart is pitifully vulnerable. The braggart and liar is a courageous man. The worldly diplomat is a lady's lapdog. The ingenue is a materialistic schemer. The burglar is no burglar. The churchy old reformer is a shrewd observer. The conventional snob is a troubled and intelligent woman. The great beauty has no power over her husband. These contradictory traits of character, revealed one by one as the play goes on, succeed but do not permanently displace one another. They ebb and flow through the characters, and it is no accident, I think, that Heartbreak House is a ship, its owner and philosopher a captain, and the play's most poetic imagery predominantly marine.

The nightmarish fluidity of the characters inundates the play's schematism. Since the people will not stay put, since good people will not be good or bad people bad, the plot misses a point and the allegory a moral. Yet the failure of the plot, the blurring of the allegory, introduce into *Heartbreak House* the extra dimension which is so often lacking in Shaw's work. The third element, by unsettling the other two—the comedy of morals, and the political allegory—has given the drama an

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interior tension, a sense of dubiety and disquietude. The brightness of the comedy and the grandeur of the allegory intensify this final, anxious uncertainty and raise it to the level of tragic doubt. To the pathos of the play's lost people is added the terror of the play's lost author, who could not, in conscience, make his story come out right, or, indeed, come out at all. For the author as well as for the characters the apocalyptic air raid that finishes the play appears to come as a merciful release from striving. Like a nervous and abstracted conversationalist, he had already begun to repeat himself before it happened.

Of the three elements discussed, the first is most conspicuously present in Orson Welles's production. The Mercury Theater company act out *Heartbreak House* as if it were one of those weekend comedies by Rachel Crothers or Frederick Lonsdale. Mady Christians, as the captain's emancipated daughter, gives a fair imitation of Ina Claire. With the exception of George Coulouris, whose Boss Mangan is a genuinely strident, strangled, unhappy, self-made man, the captain's guests appear to be the poised, self-confident, ineffably impertinent loungers that we meet so often at theatrical house parties, though they lack a good deal of the style and speed to which we are accustomed. So far as possible, neuroticism and anxiety have been banished from the stage. The set, as well as the characters, has been brightened up into cheerful conventionality: the captain's psychically malodorous house seems to have been carefully airconditioned. Since this is a play which, as Shaw himself said, "began with an atmosphere and does not contain one word that was foreseen before it was written," a play which draws its life from the ominous thickness of its atmosphere, the effect of Mr. Welles's housecleaning is obvious. Under such circumstances, the serious parts of the play lose almost all meaning, and *Heartbreak House* seems a sentimental misnomer for the gay if languid world in which the Mercury Theater Shavians dwell.

The failure of Mr. Welles's production to expose the contradictions that corrode Shaw's people is most damaging in the key cases of Hector Hushabye, played by Vincent Price, and Captain Shotover, played by Mr. Welles. Hector Hushabye, as written, is a real fantastico, a *commedia dell'arte* clown with a touch of nobility, an extravagant rhetorician who can be a poet, a ham actor who is tortured by sincerity. Mr. Price, who was Prince Albert in *Victoria Regina,* plays Hector as if the two characters had a good deal in common. This erratic personage, who is of all the captain's relatives his most sympathetic listener, is bleached into a goodlooking, wooden Englishman with a stolid interest in routine infidelity.

The captain undergoes an even more startling transformation. Mr. Welles as an actor has always seemed to secrete a kind of viscous holy oil with which he sprays the rough surfaces of his roles. He has this time applied so thick a coat that the real Captain Shotover is practically invisible and what appears on the stage under the captain's name is an identical twin of the rabbi in *Winterset*. Where the real captain is brisk

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and peppery, Mr. Welles is slow and sibylline. The real captain is a retired man of action; Mr. Welles is a retired armchair prophet. The funereal deliberation of Mr. Welles's performance obliterates the distinction made by the playwright between the vigor and enterprise of the old England and the decadent lassitude of the new, a distinction which is the mainspring of the play's political allegory. The contradictions within the captain himself, the drunkenness and madness that deflect the old man's will and discolor his vision, are likewise suppressed. Mr. Welles's captain exudes an odor of unmitigated sanctity, and the play's ultimate and most grotesque irony, which reveals its wise man as a besotted crank, goes by unperceived.

The sentimentality of Mr. Welles's acting, the nervelessness of his direction, the bare, mechanical competence of the majority of his supporting cast combine to act as a steam roller on Shaw's *Heartbreak House*. The density of the original structure is lost; the play is flattened out until it looks like a sketchy blueprint of itself. Mr. Welles's production can only serve to remind the public that the original still exists in the library.

Shaw described his own play as a "Fantasia in the Russian manner on English themes," and in his preface to the published version, he notes that Chekhov "had produced four fascinating dramatic studies of *Heartbreak House*." One of these was *The Sea Gull*, which has recently been done by the Theater Guild in association with the Lunts. The resemblances between the two plays are only superficial. They have in common the "futility" which is supposed to be Chekhov's special property. Both show the disintegration of a cultured, leisured class. Both emphasize the perverse contradictions of human nature. Both use the "confession" as a method of revealing character. Shaw's play, however, deals in generalizations; Chekhov's in particularities. Shaw's people are thought of as symbols of abstract social ideas; Chekhov's people are observed concretely, and only in the aggregate become symbolic of a social order. Shaw's conception of character is inorganic; Chekhov's organic. The dramatic quick-changes to which the characters of *Heartbreak House* are subjected proceed not from the characters themselves but from a generalization about human beings in the mind of the playwright. Even the most complex of the *Heartbreak House* people are literary fabrications, wound together skein by skein. The antithetical traits of Chekhov's people, on the contrary, have grown together in such a way that it is often impossible to disentangle a single strand. Even in the treatment of the "confession" one sees the artificiality of Shaw and the simple naturalness of Chekhov. Chekhov's confessions seem to arise from an artless preoccupation with the self which runs throughout Russian life and literature. Shaw's confessions are displays of an impudent and self-conscious exhibitionism which is certainly characteristic of the playwright but can hardly be said to be typical of the class and nation he writes about.

There is a certain coldness and poverty—witness the last act of

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Heartbreak House—even in Shaw's best work which prevent him from equalling the best of Chekhov. Yet *Heartbreak House,* one of his greatest plays, compares very well, I think, with *The Sea Gull,* one of Chekhov's worst. In *Heartbreak House* the vastness and nobility of the conception, the eloquence of the style, redeem the occasional thinness of the characterization, while the sentimental triviality of Chekhov's theme tends to debase the value of his most acute and poignant observations. The older people in *The Sea Gull,* the successful writer, the actress, the unhappy spinster who drinks, the invalid landowner are among the best shabby-genteel portraits in Chekhov's gallery, but the young people, with whom the plot is really concerned, are melodramatic figures seen at a distance through a mist of tears. The commonplace character of the plot, which tells of a young girl's "ruin" at the hands of a vain and selfish older man, and of her young lover's consequent suicide, is not improved by the "poetic" analogy drawn between the girl and a sea gull shot by a bored sportsman. The difficulty is that the girl's degradation is not directly observed but summed up in its tritest outlines by one of the characters, and the inner motivation for the boy's collapse is never given. The real story takes place offstage. It is not properly incorporated in the play, and the playwright, consequently, is demanding sympathy for his characters on what are artistically false pretenses. The final irony by which Chekhov makes the novelist forget both the significance he himself had attributed to the sea gull and the fact that he had ordered it to be stuffed, is an extremely vulgar concession to the conventional demands for neatness in playwriting, a concession which Chekhov in his later plays would never have made.

The acting of the Guild company was such as to draw a clean line between what is meretricious and what is good in the play. Both of the young people were bad. The girl was merely pallid, but Richard Whorf's Constantine was a kind of museum of horrors, containing all the clichés and curiosities of juvenile acting. The older people were, on the whole, good, ranging from the excellence of Margaret Webster as the ironic Masha, through the skill and frequent insight of Alfred Lunt's Trigorin, the solidity of Sydney Greenstreet's Peter Sorin, down to the slick overacting of Lynn Fontanne's Arkadina.

Stark Young's sharp and unaffected translation cleared away a great many of the cobwebs which one had previously thought to be part of Chekhov, but which prove merely to have clung to the styles of his earlier translators. It is to be hoped that Mr. Young will next devote himself to one of Chekhov's more mature plays.

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MAGAZINE CHRONICLE

BRITISH PERIODICALS

Between the armament boom and the conciliatory temper of the Comintern, British liberalism has not only survived the Great Crisis but, in recent years, revived as well. Its relatively authentic and stable character is attested by its response to events in Moscow. "No one can believe the stuff about the poisoning of Gorky," remarks *The New Statesman* (March 4) and proceeds to dismiss the Trial of the 21 as substantially a frame-up. We miss in such editorials the note of remorse, the guilty whine, the obfuscating rhetoric which characterized American liberal commentaries on the recent trial. The reaction of English liberalism is candid. It is outspoken because it has little to regret or to conceal. Its vanity is not involved, its prestige is not threatened, it has given few hostages to Stalinism—or, for that matter, to any other force, reactionary or progressive.

If British liberalism is more genuine than the American product, British Stalinism is by the same token more impotent; and in England the contradictions between right and left, near-left and far-left, do not reach the same pitch of violence as elsewhere. The literary output is largely poetic in form, lyrical in temper, and heterogeneous in ideology. Good fiction is scarce, the plebeian note occurs rarely, and criticism (with exceptions to be noted) resembles the intimate and fragmentary conversation of college cliques.

One cannot be sure how the trial, the foreign policy of the Chamberlain government, and the declining prosperity will affect the English scene in coming months. But to judge by the periodicals, the first quarter of 1938 was a time of comparative truce among literary factions. The *Colosseum* (Catholic) continues to agitate for Franco, and the *Left Review* (Stalinist) for Negrin, but between the two extremes there is a large area of political agnosticism or mere indifference. The latest statements of some of the older writers are significant. A few years ago Wyndham Lewis was writing his admiring study of Hitler, and T. S. Eliot was deciding to exclude any large number of "free-thinking Jews" from his snug agrarian Utopia. Now, questioned as to his stand on the Spanish Loyalists, Mr. Eliot merely pleads for detachment: "While I am naturally sympathetic, I still feel convinced that it is best that at least a few men of letters should remain isolated, and take no part in these collective activities" (*Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War,* published by *Left Review*). And Mr. Lewis: "I have learnt my lesson, and, in spite of being the pure revolutionary, I am a bit of a realist too. Hence my extraordinary broadmindedness in politics. . . . I have been

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much deceived by politicians, and I will never write another line for or against any of them" (*Twentieth Century Verse,* Wyndham Lewis Number, January).

Among the periodicals, Mr. Eliot's *Criterion* comes well within the category of tolerance and detachment advocated by its editor. His Anglo-Catholic convictions affect less and less the content of his magazine; and we are apt to find, as in the April issue, Stephen Spender combing the thought of Yeats for traces of fascism, while on the very next page Father D'Arcy piously reviews a pious work by Father Bede Frost. Thus the great traditionalist and anti-eclectic of the '20s has become, in the '30s, the editor of one of the biggest clearing-houses of cultural opinion in the world. Physically handsome and impressive as ever, well-weighted with reviews and chronicles, the April number of *The Criterion* contains less than its usual quota of solid articles and good verse. "Marx and Proudhon," by Montgomery Butchart, testifies to the renewed interest in anarchism among British intellectuals, but, as argument, lacks conviction and authority. And much the finest writing in the issue is to be found in A. Desmond Hawkins' Fiction Chronicle, where Kafka receives some sensitive criticism, and the needle of skepticism is applied to Frederic Prokosch's curiously inflated English reputation. "Isn't that an extraordinarily *feminine* prose? [inquires Hawkins, after quoting a passage from *The Seven Who Fled*] Doesn't it suggest a rabbit's-eye view of a weasel? And isn't the hidden subject of it some form of the way of a man with a maid? Or, since we are dealing with Asiatics and quintessential cruelties, shall we instead say *The Way of an Eagle with a Lady Novelist?* To put it more plainly—if we allow for Mr. Prokosch's greater sophistication and more distinguished style, doesn't he share with Miss Ethel M. Dell the art of objectifying and *disguising,* (thinly but sufficiently) a popular social neurosis?"

Mr. Eliot's "Commentary" in the April issue is in his customary editorial style. Recently he polemicized against the Nuffield Endowments at Oxford; now the target is the Music and Drama Bill. To characterize Mr. Eliot's efforts as social critic we have only to recall what he once wrote of Matthew Arnold: "We fight rather to keep something alive than in the expectation that anything will triumph." Mr. Eliot's tone of religious despair and valetudinarian humility are lacking in *Scrutiny,* which nevertheless fights the same lonely battle for humane culture against British philistinism. The "scrutinies" or surveys which give this magazine its distinction as well as its name, are often intelligent but nearly always inconclusive; and L. C. Knights' "The Modern Universities," in the March issue, exemplifies both qualities. What is needed in these pieces, aside from fresher values and a more trenchant spirit, is some of the precision and respect for data which distinguish the survey techniques of such American magazines as *Fortune* and *The New Republic. Scrutiny* is broadly cultural in its contents, agnostic in its politics; *Purpose,* editorially for Social Credit, prints literary articles which have little connection with the economics of Major Douglas. Criticism is a

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specialty of this magazine; much of it is good; and when an inferior piece gets published, like G. W. Stonier's attack on Pound in the Winter number, amends are quickly made. Stonier had asserted that Pound was mainly valuable as the inspirer of T. S. Eliot. And he is answered (in the April-June issue) by Eliot himself. "That Pound was Poe to my Baudelaire is simply nonsense," says Mr. Eliot, and discusses at some length his relations with the older poet in their now legendary youth.

Coming to what might be called the principled reactionaries, namely the Catholics, we find them swimming, like the rest, in the general current of tolerance and *rapprochment;* though in their case, to be sure, it is rather the international manoeuvers of the Vatican than any specifically English factor, which determines their conciliatory stand. In any case, *Arena,* liveliest of England's several Catholic magazines, tries to streamline sacred doctrine, declares that revolution is "essentially a Christian process," and responds to the "outstretched hand" movement on the Continent by devoting an entire issue (October-December, 1937) to respectful analyses of the alleged fallacies of dialectical materialism. The literary articles in *Arena* are quite solidly conceived, though far behind the efforts of a Massis or a Maritain in France; and the January-March issue (which will be the last, since *Arena* is to be discontinued) contains, among other readable pieces, an informative study of Kierkegaard by Basil Wrightson. Of *Colosseum* I have seen no issue later than that of December, 1937. This magazine seems to hew more soberly to the line of churchly reaction than its "revolutionary" colleague. And it is by so much the less interesting. There is a curious article on Ernest Hemingway by Mason Wade, which concludes: "it is to be hoped he has now reached a higher plane of mysticism, and that he will write of life as well as he has of death." Mr. Wade, though doubtless a good Christian, seems in Hemingway's case to have proved a bad prophet. One wonders what he will make of John Dos Passos and James T. Farrell, who are announced as subjects of articles to come.

Like the Catholics, the Stalinists owe their appearance of liberalism, not to any revival of the English tradition, but to directives from abroad —in this case from the Kremlin. And *Left Review*'s manifesto against Chamberlain (April), to which are affixed some of the best names in Burke's Peerage and the British Army Directory, is merely an English version of the new national-union manoeuver of the Comintern. Far gone in dulness and the dry rot of gentility, full of half-baked and malformed little contributions, *Left Review* concentrates on Spain and Britain, and significantly ignores the late trial.

Life and Letters Today, which advertizes itself as a "quarterly *Left Review,*" is considerably better than its self-imposed blurb would lead one to suspect. The Spring issue contains verse by Muriel Rukeyser, Delmore Schwartz, George Barker and others; stories by Mary Butts and H. E. Bates; Thomas Mann's artcle on Masaryk; and reviews of nearly every book on the English lists, including one on *Sailing and Cruising* (*For the Small Boat Owner*).

Unlike such people's-front omnibuses as *Left Review* and *Life and*

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Letters Today, New Verse is the most strictly edited and probably the most vigorous little periodical in England. It continues to be the organ of Auden and Co., though it is not unresponsive to new talents. Anti-war and anti-fascist, *New Verse* is also anti-Bloomsbury. It takes off from a lively if not very profound insurgency, which is half-bohemian, half-social in content; but which, despite its mongrel character, puts the magazine far to the left of the more official left-wing organs. And the fact that *New Verse* can kid Auden for accepting the King's Medal, blast Day Lewis for taking a post on the Book Society, raise questions about the alleged arrest in the U.S.S.R. of Boris Pasternak, and still continue to flourish, suggests that the political atmosphere of the islands is friendlier to editorial independence than is that of America. The latest (March) issue of *New Verse* contains a long "Ode" by Frederic Prokosch, poems by Spender, Kenneth Allott, Ruthven Todd and others. The "Remarks" department—written, one gathers, by Geoffrey Grigson—includes a tirade against *Biedermeierkultur,* or the cult of bibelots, as it reveals itself in the art reviews of *The New Statesman.* There is also an answer to Tom Harrisson (one of the founders and "controllers" of Mass-Observation), who recently, in an issue of *Light and Dark,* assailed Auden for seeming to prefer "Art and Death to Life."

The unity and the polemical fire which Mr. Grigson's one-man editorship lends to *New Verse,* are lacking to *Twentieth Century Verse.* This small but readable periodical, which recently published the valuable Wyndham Lewis Number, is a poetic miscellany; the influence of the younger writers (Dylan Thomas, etc.) seems to predominate; and the editorial trend is away from ideology and causes. The March issue contains poems by D. S. Savage, R. B. Fuller, Julian Symons (the editor), Geoffrey Parsons and others. And the review section subjects William Carlos Williams to a curiously bigotted attack as a "fake Imagist-Objectivist."

Two other magazines come within the creative category. *Wales* is a regional affair, with vaguely proletarian sympathies but little positive social character. Such militancy as it has, is directed against the "pansy competition," the "log-rolling, cocktail parties, book clubs, knighthoods, O.M.'s, and superannuated effeminacy" of London circles. Since its first appearance last summer, *Wales* has printed some excellent verse and fiction, beginning with a good piece of fantastic prose by Dylan Thomas in the first number. I have not seen a recent issue. The newly organized *Townsman,* on the other hand, is avowedly anti-political and esthetic, calling for the restoration of Bohemia. Opening at the top on a spiral hinge, its format suggests a school notebook; while its editorial style seems to be derived from the famous epistolary code of Ezra Pound. The contents include a fragment of Pound's opera, *Villon,* and some nondescript prose and verse; suggesting that there is little freshness and less unity in the purer precincts of Bohemia.

F. W. DUPEE

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BOOKS

CRITICISM AND PSEUDO-CRITICISM

LITERARY OPINION IN AMERICA: *A Book of Modern Critical Essays. Edited by Morton Dauwen Zabel. Harper's.* $2.50.

This large volume consists of fifty-three articles, dated since the end of the War, by thirty-one American writers, together with a Foreword and a long Introduction by the editor. The material has not been assembled from the point of view of any coherent and significant principle of organization; and the selection of contents must therefore be understood as dictated largely by Mr. Zabel's personal taste. Mr. Zabel partly recognizes this, though sometimes he tries in his Introduction to state an organizing principle: "In choosing and arranging these fifty critical essays, it has been the purpose to show what such literary standards count for in America today, how they emerge from the past or develop in the present, and how the recognition of them can come only through responsibility toward criticism as a craft in itself, unconfused by the techniques, sciences, forms of belief, or personal and popularizing motives which are today largely pre-empting its authority."

Since Mr. Zabel nowhere even approximately defines "criticism as a craft in itself," and since a criticism "unconfused" by techniques, sciences, beliefs and motives is—if we stop to think what we are saying—altogether inconceivable, we must conclude that Mr. Zabel here fails in his attempt to find a principle. His taste has led him to exclude from his collection "popular book reviewing and academic scholarship," two activities which, he says, "are usually hostile to an active tradition of criticism in America" (though why these are more hostile than, say, Malcolm Cowley, Stark Young, or Robert Morss Lovett, who are all included, is not made clear). He has, secondly, taken an unusually large percentage of his contents from the "little magazines" of the period. Thirdly, he seems to have a preference for writers who somewhere use phrases like "purely literary values."

Mr. Zabel's failure to integrate his collection in terms of an organizing principle is not a special defect. He shares in the general lack of agreement about the nature and function of criticism, which is no doubt a derivative of the lack of agreement about the nature of the world. He has, nevertheless, brought together in one book (and there is no other comparable to it) so large a number of writers and essays, that even as random sampling it is no doubt sufficiently representative of what we call American literary criticism. I propose, therefore, accepting these

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essays as given, to reflect in their light upon that unanswered question of the nature and function of criticism in our place and time. What are these writers doing?

Let us first, then, distinguish in these essays between statements made which can appropriately be called true or false, on the one hand; and, on the other, expressions of feeling, emotion, attitude, evaluings. This distinction, growingly familiar from the current popularizations of "semantics" and "scientific empiricism," has not yet figured to any extent in discussions of critical method. Literary criticism, however, is no more exempt from the usual rules of discourse than any other field. The crucial importance of the distinction is seen in this: whereas the empirically significant statements made by the critics can be verified by evidence, the expressions of feeling, attitude, evaluings are subject to no such check. The latter we may accept or reject, label good or bad, analyze in terms of consequences or implicit assumptions, deem appropriate or noble or evil, all in terms of our own sets of attitudes and values; but we cannot meaningfully assert them to be true or false.

Among the significant statements made in these essays is one group which refers to the technique and medium of literature. These range from R. P. Blackmur's listings of the words most frequently recurring in E. E. Cummings' poems to William Troy's description of the distinctive character of Virginia Woolf's imagery to Edmund Wilson's detailed analysis of the parallel between Joyce's *Ulysses* and the narrative of the *Odyssey*. Statements of this type are also notably to be found in Philip Blair Rice's essay on Paul Valéry, in Theodore Spencer on Yeats, and in Francis Fergusson on Eugene O'Neill.

Nevertheless, in the collection as a whole, these statements dealing with technique and medium bulk small. Many of the critics are not at all concerned with them. Many of the remainder delude themselves with the belief that they are writing such statements, but are found on examination to be unaware of the difference between significant statement and expression. When Yvor Winters writes of Robert Bridges: "The quality of language over the gap of time is constant. In restraint, economy, richness of feeling, in what I should call an extreme generality or universality of import accomplished with no loss in the specification of the perception, these poems and a few others in the volume will stand the most scrutinizing comparison, I believe, with any of Shakespeare's sonnets"; when Robert Morss Lovett writes: "It is characteristic of Sherwood Anderson's art that, instead of seeking escape from life and forgetfulness of it, he grapples with it in an effort to set the tortured spirit free from its servitude to matter";—it should be clear that they are saying virtually nothing. They are expressing their own feelings, which may be more or less interesting, worthy, or appropriate to context, but are in no plausible sense true or false.

So long as works of literature (and any other art might be substituted) are written and read, criticism which consists of significant statements about technique and medium will continue to be made, and will, I believe, be legitimate, relevant, and valued by at least some persons,

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among whom I for one am to be included. It would be ridiculous to discuss a poem in Chinese if we did not know Chinese. It is only less obviously ridiculous to discuss a poem or play or novel if we do not understand at least something of the method of the poet, dramatist or novelist, of their technical devices, their imagery, their allusions, their structural manoeuvers. A critic who has more time, intelligence, knowledge, or discrimination, can do part of this work for us (the record of which work is, besides, pleasurable for its own sake); why should we not welcome his aid?

This kind of criticism has an additional importance. Whatever else a work of art may mean, it communicates solely through a specific technique operative upon a specific medium—whether pigments or stone or sounds or words. An adequate comprehension of the other meanings, therefore, is hardly to be expected if we do not comprehend the technique and the medium. In new or complex works of art this is not easy.

A second group of significant statements among these essays, not always sharply differentiated from the first, deals with the "approach" to the literary works or writers under discussion from the point of view of various fields such as sociology, psychology, anthropology. This group can be further sub-divided into one type which treats the literary works as data for assertions in these fields; and a second type which examines sociological, psychological, anthropological material insofar as this, in one way or another, is or is alleged to be incorporated into the given literary work.

The first type is illustrated by Robert Cantwell's essay on Sinclair Lewis, Robert Penn Warren on T. S. Stribling, or John Crowe Ransom on "The Esthetic of Regionalism," and by sections of almost all the essays. Such writings are, of course, in actuality minor treatises in sociology, psychology, anthropology. There is certainly no reason why such treatises should not be written. Literary works are undoubtedly important data in these three fields, and in other fields. Unfortunately, few "literary critics" are competent sociologists, psychologists, or anthropologists; and consequently the minor treatises which they turn out in these fields are quite uniformly mediocre. Unfortunately, also, few sociologists, psychologists or anthropologists are intimately acquainted with literary data; and their excursions towards this branch of their subject matter are scarcely less mediocre.

The second type is less unequivocally defined. When can we say that sociological, psychological, anthropological . . . material is "incorporated" in literary works and that analysis from such points of view is thus legitimate? This sort of analysis is undoubtedly *possible*. Whether or not we judge it to be *relevant* to the task of the critic will depend as much upon the set of interests which we ourselves accept as upon the abstracted character of the work considered apart from its historical context where it enters into relationships with an audience. Assuming relevance, we can truthfully make statements about the psychoanalytic oddities in *Hamlet,* or the Grail Legend and the Adonis myth in *The Wasteland,* or the class angle of Sinclair Lewis or Kenneth Fearing.

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Blackmur is right when he says that "no observation, no collection of observations, ever tells the whole story"; he is merely silly when he tries to back this up by a super-relativism denying any kind of objectivity to any knowledge, and then in the next breath stating that "there will always remain, quite untouched, the thing itself." The whole story is never told because there are always new contexts into which we may fit the work, and because history is not static but always presenting new problems, new aims, new interests, into whose relation we endeavor to fit the work. But just what contexts we shall consider relevant in the approach to literary works depends finally upon a judgment of value.

In this sense we find in literature also what we take there. If we have dominant interests, today, integrated through political aims, how absurd to imagine that we will avoid politics in literary appreciation and criticism (as if Dante were a non-religious or for that matter non-political poet). Literature is neither above nor aside from, but part of life. Not seeing this so simple and lucid platitude is the original fallacy of both "pure art" and crude reductionisms.

But when we recognize that what establishes relevance in criticism involves finally an evaluation, we are at the borderline which separates significant statement from expression. And it is on the far side of the border that there lies a great part of what is written in this collection of Mr. Zabel's. Doubtless these critics think that they are writing about works of literature and about aesthetic problems. Actually, literary works and problems are often only accidental stimuli which provoke elaborate verbalizations of their responses to experience in general. Their "subject" might equally well be food or subways or the difficulties of getting a steady job.

From this last point of view, it would be absurd to talk about "literature." We must judge these essays and their authors psychologically and socially. These writers are all, of course, middle-class intellectuals. Not unexpectedly we find them in their essays reflecting and projecting the maze of currents and drifts which momentarily have swept along this or that section of the middle classes during the past twenty years. Humanism, Americansm, traditionalism, regionalism, Stalinism, agrarianism, omnivorous liberalism, all have their spokesmen in Babbitt or Mencken or Winters or Ransom or Gregory or Tate or Lovett. Some few of the elders (the now dead Babbitt and More, Mencken . . .) have smugly found niches still preserved for them at the customary price of reconciliation to things as they are. The rest, most at any rate of them, search for a home, understanding neither the pitfalls of the road nor the conditions for secure occupancy. They feel muddled. They cannot make up their minds. They don't like "doctrines" (often using the pretense of not liking "doctrines" in the "approach to literature"): that is, they haven't the courage to accept a clear and determined moral and social program. But the next moment they become regionalists (Ransom) or traditionalists (Winters) or Stalinists (Burke, Gregory, Cantwell, Cowley), preferring as a rule to do the dirty work of corrupt and reactionary social movements under the banner of: literary criticism.

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Insofar as the critic makes significant statements about the technique and medium of literature and about matters in fields plausibly related to the production and appreciation of literature, we may view such statements impersonally, finding them proved true or false by the evidence at hand as in the case of empirical statements in any other realm. To the extent that the critic's essay is the vehicle for the expression of attitudes, values, interests which are never merely literary but consciously or unconsciously part of a moral and political program, he can be granted no exemption from the buffetings of that arena where moral and political programs clash. And if the essays in this collection are indeed representative, some vigorous buffeting is in order.

JAMES BURNHAM

THE SOUND AND THE FURY

THE UNVANQUISHED. *By William Faulkner. Random House.* $2.50.

It is a curious fact about William Faulkner that with every novel he produces, his position in American letters becomes less easy to define. In his early and most impressive novels he seemed to be performing a service for our literature of which, ever since the time of Hawthorne, it had stood greatly in need: with all their limitations, these books succeeded not only in recording various influences at work in our civilization (in the South, these influences may be said to emerge in their simplest and most significant forms), but in relating them to ideas of human tragedy, in freeing them from their immediate and purely physical manifestations. It should be noted, however, that the ideas behind these novels were never actually made clear: one could never be certain as to whether it was Mr. Faulkner's intention, in portraying these depraved characters and horrific situations, to present us with his vision of a lost and hopeless world—or whether he was merely interested in sensationalism as an end in itself.

The Unvanquished is a collection of tales which has the continuity of a novel, and which is concerned with the effect upon a family of Southern aristocrats of the closing months of the Civil War and its disrupting aftermath. The family is the Sartoris family (to whose descendants we were introduced in *Soldier's Pay*): the valiant grandmother, fighting a single-handed and losing battle against a common enemy; the father who, with a regiment composed mainly of untrained fighters, conducts a kind of guerilla warfare behind the lines; Drusilla Hawk, the father's mistress and later his second wife, who dons the uniform of a Confederate soldier and joins her lover's troop; and Bayard Sartoris—first seen as a boy, bewildered in the midst of startling events but animated by the common principle of resisting the invader—and later as a young man who goes to meet his father's murderer. The theme, as implied in the title, would seem to be that of the South clinging in the midst of desolation and defeat to all that is noblest in its heritage:

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doomed though these people may be in a material sense, they refuse one and all to surrender—and in that refusal lies the source of their spiritual victory. It is hard to associate Mr. Faulkner with so conventional a theme; and in justice to him it must be added that the action of the book is not necessarily restricted to it, but frequently (as is the case with the action in so many of Mr. Faulkner's books) spills over into implications of something else never so clearly defined. It is possible to arrive at a wholly different and rather more interesting conclusion: that this is the study of a people fighting, literally, for their honor—and becoming, in the process, uprooted, demoralized, ultimately dishonored—plundered by the enemy not only of their material resources but of those moral and social values by which, in less disturbing times, they were able to live. In order to preserve the ideal of the South—first as an independent nation and later as an economically self-sustaining community—it is necessary to sacrifice every ideal ordinarily associated with Southern civilization. The tragedy of this situation lies, of course, in its necessity: the grandmother, for example, faced with the destruction of her home, and dedicated to the common purpose of showing fight to the invader, has no choice but to lie, cheat, engage in illicit barter and otherwise violate all the traditions of her caste. (It is true that Bayard, at the end of the book, stands unarmed before his father's murdered and allows the latter to fire at him—but this *beau geste* in itself indicates that the War and its subsequent period of economic instability are over, and that the South is gradually restoring to itself all its bygone traditions of impractical idealism and *noblesse oblige*). This is surely a powerful theme; but one can never be certain that it is quite what Mr. Faulkner intended, for it is only sparsely developed in the action; and in the attitude of the characters toward their destiny it scarcely figures at all. Involved though these people may be in an heroic situation, they exhibit so little understanding of it that they cannot be described as heroes—except in a purely romantic sense. Drusilla Hawk and the grandmother are indeed romantic heroines, in all that the term implies; there is a good deal of the Faulkner violence about them: toned down, however, they—and their exploits as well—might easily fit into any popular novel about the civil War. And they are balanced by such shadowy figures as John and Bayard Sartoris (the latter is, incidentally, the hero and the narrator of the story). Only the Negro slaves are endowed with any kind of reality—but it is at best a class-reality; and they, again, represent those passive, uncomplicated and more or less symbolic types with whom Mr. Faulkner's talents seem especially fitted to deal.

And the scene in which some of these slaves are assembled *en masse* is surely the most effective in the book, as it is one of the finest that Mr. Faulkner has ever written. The band of homeless Negroes, wandering through the countryside, is halted before a bridge by a detachment of Yankee cavalry; they push on, the cavalry fighting against them; the bridge explodes, and in another instant the whole mob is flung

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headlong into the waters below. In this scene, the confusion and helplessness of a mass of people is set vividly before us—in such a way, moreover, as to remind us of the demoralization of the whole war-torn South, the collapse of an entire social structure. And one wonders why so many of the other episodes throughout this book, which are written more or less in the same key of violence, should fall so far below it in poetic suggestiveness, or in sheer narrative vigor. Shocking as many of these episodes are in themselves, they seem to have become strangely depleted, in the process of narration, of all of their power to shock: the reader apprehends them, so to speak, intellectually, and sometimes not until after they have taken place.

HELEN NEVILLE

BUSINESS AND POWER

A HISTORY OF THE BUSINESS MAN. *By Miriam Beard. Macmillan.* $5.00.

It is surprising, and yet not entirely so, that this book should have received such a cool reception at the hands of the literary reviews. For it is the kind of historical writing that has been developed to a fine point in America: I refer to the so-called text-book or popularizing historical work which is at the same time a competent synthesis of the best products of original scholarship. It should not be assumed, however, that Miss Beard's *A History of the Business Man* is only a journeyman's job. The book has wit and pace as well as a shrewd understanding of the effects of the interactions of economic affairs and less mundane matters; for Miss Beard can write—and does—as competently of the Medici *qua* art patrons as she has of them *qua* traders and bankers; as wisely of Calvin and Savonarola as she has of the Fuggers and Jacques Coller. In short, the book is an excellent example of the one-volume survey type of work that James Harvey Robinson and Charles A. Beard (the author's father) have pioneered in this country. For this reason, it should have been a publishing "natural."

It hasn't been. I suspect that a partial explanation of the book's failure, from the viewpoint of its reception, has been the unfamiliarity of its subject matter. From the Civil War to the end of the World War a curious kind of parochialism descended upon America; and this retirement into a national self-sufficiency reflected itself in our cultural interests. It can be argued convincingly that a commercial people—simply because it is visiting around all the time in the course of its buying and selling—develops catholic tastes; while an exclusively industrial people, whose contacts with the outside world are through the occasional intervention of foreigners, becomes more and more limited in its horizons. Before the Civil War we were the former: our ships thronged the ports of all the countries fringing the seven seas; our young men visited Europe, the Levant and the Orient and learned the languages, customs and

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histories of their peoples. It was no accident therefore that our literary men knew Europe's past and present as well as their own country's. Had a book with a theme like this been written about a century ago—of course it could not have been the same book—it would have been eagerly read by intelligent people in New York and Philadelphia, Charleston and New Orleans.

Miss Beard, I am afraid, is doomed to a limited reading public because Americans are not yet equipped with a cultural apparatus to make her book intelligible or important for them. Only contemporaneously are we returning to the main current of European affairs; and as our destiny becomes more and more linked with that of Europe our interest in Europe's past—which, we are beginning to see, is America's part as well—is bound to become more real. Works of this kind, if they could only be assured of an adequate public, would hasten that process.

For those who are unfamiliar with the subject-matter of European economic history, I cannot recommend a better introductory manual. It is far and away the most sophisticated (in the literal sense of the word) presentation currently available. Miss Beard has read every significant product of European scholarship of the past fifty years and has mastered its contents. Like her father, she carries her learning easily. Only the person who is technically familiar with the literature can appreciate the extraordinary labors that have gone into its composition. Those who have learned to recognize the names of Pirenne, Sée, Sombart, Weber, Hauser and Hecksher—among the outstanding figures in modern European historiography—will also be able to note with what ease Miss Beard makes her way through the tangle of conflicting theories.

A History of the Business Man, starting with antiquity and proceeding to the present, seeks to tell the story of business activity in terms of the part played by the individual enterpriser. This plan has its virtues as well as its faults: for within such a frame it is possible for the author to show the relations between material interests and culture and politics. It should be no cause for surprise, therefore, that the richest chapters in the book have to do with the period from the thirteenth through the seventeenth centuries, in which the economics of the Italian, German and Dutch cities predominated. The chapters concerning themselves with the epoch of English and French mercantilism are almost equally good. From then on the narrative becomes more hurried and the book's intention somewhat confused.

Miss Beard is no materialist (none of her mentors is, either; which does not mean one cannot learn from them); there is no inner rhythm to her narrative, as a result. Civilizations come and go, somehow repeating the same pattern, although under different circumstances. That is not to say that she has no awareness of the impact of economic matters upon politics; for her shrewd analyses of the English, American and French Revolutions indicate her familiarity with the *immediate* causative rôle of economic crises upon political decisions, particularly at those points which have been crucial in human history. The pattern she employs is one that merits extended examination, from the political point

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of view certainly. Toward the end of her narrative, she has put it simply in this way: " . . . men suffered on the land but survived; while in the cities, they flourished—and faded (p. 734)."

Now, here is a political maxim that opens up extraordinary vistas. It assumes that state power from time to time has fallen into the hands of merchants, bankers and industrialists. But because these have never succeeded in institutionalizing their wealth, like the landlords, they have come and gone; but the landlords (and the generals, who are drawn from the same class) have always remained. And in time they have always triumphed. The fact is, at many of the critical periods in modern history—in the English Revolution, the French Revolution, the American Civil War—the struggle has been against landlordism. Contemporaneously, of course, the economic power of landlordism does not come from rent altogether but from *rente* as well; nevertheless a ruling class does seem to have a greater tenacity when it is firmly rooted, institutionally and politically, in the land. The soil, at any rate, particularly when it is associated with entail, serves as a basis for the transmission of power. The greater strength of the English and German ruling classes today may be contrasted with the weak positions of the French and the Japanese. Note also that the American ruling class is entirely urban and to this degree anchorless.

Certainly the idea is attractive: not, of course, as a basic economic pattern, as Miss Beard would have it; but it goes a long way in throwing light on the ancillary problem of the sources and strength of class political power.

LOUIS M. HACKER

THE TRUEST POETRIE

ENGLISH PASTORAL POETRY. *By William Empson. Norton.* $2.50.

It is important that some attempt should be made by criticism to explain the art of the past in terms of the theory which is an adequate explanation of the art of the present; only thus can an age justify its enjoyment of the literature of the past. It is no accident that the age which produced the heroic play also produced Dryden's criticism, or that the age which, in spite of Wordsworth's qualification, persisted in viewing literature as the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings produced Coleridge's lectures on Shakespeare.

The importance of *English Pastoral Poetry* is that it does for our day something like what Dryden and Coleridge did for theirs: it deals with the past in terms which make it available to the present. By finding a method of analysis which brings into focus the dominant purpose of our literature and then applying this method to the literature of other ages, Mr. Empson frees us from the dreary necessity of justifying our concern with past literature on no better grounds than those of historical

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interest. Unfortunately all this is far from apparent at first glance; for there is a kind of inverted vanity at work in Mr. Empson's book which leads him to write as if his subject were much less important than it really is and as he must very well know it to be.

It is true that he is in a difficult situation, for his method of analysis is one which demands great tact if it is to be used successfully. He starts from the assumption that the thing written is an elaborate metaphor, what Eliot somewhere calls the objective correlative of the author's thought and feeling. It follows from this assumption that the work of art is, as expression, an attempt to submit the show of things to the desires of the mind, and, as communication, an attempt to establish in the reader the attitude of which the work of art is the expression. On this assumption the critic's task is to analyze the structure of the metaphor so as to bring out all its possible implications and to make it plain, if he can, why the age which produced the work of art in question felt this complex but unified attitude to be important.

The critic who undertakes to use this method is in the awkward position of a man faced with the necessity of explaining a joke. If he explains too much he appears to condescend foolishly to his readers, and if he explains too little, his tacit assumption that his special knowledge is commonplace has the effect of making him appear in the end, not humble, but supercilious. Mr. Empson has, how consciously it is difficult to say, taken the latter course by adopting a sophisticated version of the very device he is analyzing: he presents himself to his readers by a pastoral device; he is the revolutionary critic in the guise of a correspondent of *The Times Literary Supplement*. And while this device appears in the beginning to flatter the reader, it ends by flattering Mr. Empson and annoying the reader. Perhaps this effect was unavoidable; certainly it is not easy to see how Mr. Empson could have avoided it without appearing fatuous. But it has the unfortunate consequence of forcing him constantly to belittle by implication the significance of his own work, first by omitting almost everywhere in the book a larger part of the argument than he has a right to expect the reader to supply, and secondly by giving the subject of his book a name which, for all its quasi-ironic aptness as a depreciatory gesture, is thoroughly misleading.

It is characteristic of this depreciatory manner that the crucial opening essay in the book purports to be no more than some casual observations on "Proletarian Literature." What in fact Mr. Empson is doing in this essay is to suggest that the purpose common to the larger part of our literature is indicated by what Horace Gregory has called its quality of fable. He begins by pointing out that good proletarian literature is using the same trick that pastoral has always used: "The essential trick of the old pastoral, which was felt to imply a beautiful relation between rich and poor, was to make simple people express strong feeling (felt as the most universal subject, something fundamentally true about everybody) in learned and fashionable language (so that you wrote about the

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best subject in the best way) . . . The effect was in some degree to combine in the reader or author the merits of the two sorts; he was made to mirror in himself more completely the effective elements of the society he lived in. "But this device is capable of almost endless variation as Mr. Empson is quick to suggest: one may get heroic pastoral or mock pastoral, each of which is itself capable of a good many variations; or the whole bag of pastoral tricks may be shifted from simple country people to children, workers, gangsters, in short anyone who can be thought of as standing outside the contemporary ethos, as not, in the hairy ape's phrase, "belonging."

Now it is certainly true that what we ordinarily think of as proletarian literature almost invariably uses this device in one form or another. Mr. Empson's remarks on "the realistic sort of pastoral," for example, fit *Studs Lonigan* perfectly: "So far as the person described is outside society because too poor for its benefits he is independent, as the artist claims to be, and can be a critic of society; in so far as he is forced by this into crime he is the judge of the society which judges him. This is a source of irony both against him and against the society, and if he is a sympathetic criminal he can be made to suggest both Christ as the scapegoat (so invoking Christian charity) and the sacrificial tragic hero...."

The trouble with pastoral in this sense as a definition of proletarian literature is that it is quite as good as a definition of contemporary literature in general; for nearly everything from *The Magic Mountain* to *To Have and To Have Not* is pastoral in Mr. Empson's sense. In other words, Mr. Empson is defining, not a genre, but one of the fundamental devices of literature, and the only device which makes possible the particular use of literature with which our own age is most concerned. Once this fact is clear—and in his tangential way Mr. Empson makes it clear by including in his essay on "Proletarian Literature" everyone from Faulkner to Gertrude Stein—the importance of *English Pastoral Poetry* becomes evident, and the reader, having discounted Mr. Empson's *persona,* is ready for the series of essays which follow on the various uses of the pastoral device in other ages.

It would be difficult, I think, to overestimate the value of these essays; each of them constitutes a set of notes for a history of the literature of the period it deals with. Indeed, one will learn more about the Elizabethan Drama from Mr. Empson's essay on Double Plots than can be learned from any of the standard histories of the subject. The essays on "They that have power to hurt and will do none" and Marvell's "Garden" are not, perhaps, so striking; this sort of analysis of Shakespeare and Marvell has been done before, though never, I think, with such skill as Mr. Empson shows. The essay on *The Beggars' Opera,* on the other hand, makes the full meaning of Gay's marvelous mock-pastoral available to an audience, probably for the first time since Gay's own day. Mr. Empson completely justifies his bland but devastasting remark that "it is a fine thing that the play is still popular, however stupidly it is enjoyed."

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The closing essay in the book in which Mr. Empson deals with *Alice in Wonderland* as an example of the 19th century "shift onto the child... of the obscure tradition of pastoral" shows better than any of the other essays the skill and tact with which he handles his material. I suppose no reader of *Alice* is wholly unaware of its Freudian implications; yet there are few enough people who would have the courage to risk the obvious dangers of making a Freudian analysis of the book. And this is just what Mr. Empson succeeds in doing without ever exaggerating this aspect of *Alice* (which has its full share of concealed political and moral satire too) and without ever saying any of the foolish things psycho-analysts seem so incapable of avoiding when they deal with literature.

It is not easy to think of a book of criticism in this decade to put beside Mr. Empson's. Not only is its method the critical elaboration most useful for our day but its practical criticism is richer and more pertinent than that of any book which comes to mind. Mr. Empson's manner is deceptive and sometimes annoying but the reader's reward for bearing with him will more than repay the effort it may cost him.

ARTHUR MIZENER

VERSE AND PROSE: 1937

NEW DIRECTIONS, 1937. *Edited by James Laughlin IV. New Directions: Norfolk, Conn.* $2.50.

In a fine burst of magnanimity James Laughlin IV begins his second edition of *New Directions* with a eulogy of a competitor. Comparing Gregory's *New Letters* to his own collection, he writes, it "happens to be better backed and more ably edited . . . I cannot say enough in praise of Horace Gregory's *New Letters in America.*" But it also happens that Laughlin's offering of prose and poetry is more lively and readable. His authors are concerned less directly with social problems, more with experimental writing. This fact, of course, does not account for their merits. It only helps to distinguish the two books.

Seventeen years after it was performed in Paris by the Swedish Ballet, Cocteau's *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel,* appears here in translation by Dudley Fitts. Its buffoonery is so good-humored and reasonable that it is hard to see why it once caused a public tantrum. Maybe French audiences feel it a patriotic duty to throw a fit—as they did for *Hernani,* Antoine's Théatre Libre, and still do for any new music—merely to advertise that France has a serious interest in the arts and can recognize or create an historic occasion. Already it is true that *Les Mariés,* like the fables of La Fontaine or *Zadig,* exhales a minor historic smell. The Fitts translation preserves perfectly the Cocteau qualities: the guilelessness, the slightly oracular tone.

In a note at the end of Henry Miller's "Walking Up and Down in

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China," Laughlin wrings his hands over some expurgations which as editor he had to make. "The editor is more than sorry about this—he is angry and ashamed—but he simply can't help it." He announces as "a great piece of news" that Miller has found an American publisher. "However you may feel about Miller's excessive frankness there is no way to deny his magnificent command of language."

Miller's language is impressive, all right. When he starts dreaming over his aperitif or taking his nocturnal prowls (his "obsessional walks") through the streets of Paris, he is in top form. He confides how from blind alleys, "thick clusters of whores leap out, like bats blinded by the light. They get in my hair, my ears, my eyes." He regales us with "a vault of obscene anguish saturated with angel-worms hanging from the fallen womb of a sky." (Does he really mean angel-worms?) "Every living man," he says, "is a museum that houses the horrors of the race. . . . After all, why not a little horror?"

Certainly, a little horror is a grand thing. For exactly that reason, and because Miller as a writer deserves to be taken seriously, I hope that a few of the more ornate horrors will be blue-penciled by that American publisher.

For horror more deeply disquieting there are two stories by Delmore Schwartz. I believe they are the best stories in the book. "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities" achieves a frightening reality by the device of describing an ordinary episode—the courtship of the author's mother and father—as if it were being watched on an old-fashioned flickering movie screen. This infra-reality is further intensified by the discovery that the author is only dreaming about the movie. A similar nightmare clarity pervades "The Commencement Day Address." An old man, invited to speak at a college graduation, scandalizes the polite gathering by blurting out horrid truths about the world, while he stands like a mad Isaiah beneath darting lightning. Neither of these tricky and dramatic stories seems fully formed, but they proclaim the originality and force of Delmore Schwartz.

Among an entertaining litter of surrealist "Distillates," "Dreams," and "Letters," there is a yarn by Montagu O'Reilly, "The Depraved Piano of the Nevski Prospect," which is as good as its title. It's about a Russian butler with steel teeth who magnetizes piano keys so they won't play a Chopin Etude. And it has a black-out ending that ought to please everybody. While in this mood, I could have read more of Christopher Young's "Dreams," if they had been on a par with his man who ate camphor balls. I could also have read more of the Saroyan product, although the three here are only middling.

Of the poets, Robert Fitzgerald turns in the best work technically. His sense of sound and rhythm is almost too perfect. Possibly in some department of his being he needs to limber up. Of John Wheelwright and William Carlos Williams it is easier to discern the large purpose than the small meanings. The Cummings items, too, require the usual, decent amount of decoding. For holiday relaxation the sonnets of Merrill Moore are present in all their colloquial, casual abundance. Reading them,

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feel as if I were picking apples off the ground in an enormous orchard. If I pick a bad one, I throw it down quickly, because there are plenty of good ones lying around in the grass.

From the orchard we go to the sunny meadow and hear about Gertrude Stein's play, *Daniel Webster.* This is a very busy play, full of acts and scenes and famous early Americans sitting down and standing up and talking prosaically to each other, but all the time slyly aware that they are famous early Americans. The directions for stage business and scenery stir up a grave, theatrical excitement. I understand that Miss Stein is now dismissed as old hat by critics who applauded her ten years ago. They say she is not alive to important Causes. Such nonsense only exposes the narrowness of her critics, and marks them as unworthy of the causes they champion.

In his next edition of *New Directions,* Mr. Laughlin had better get rid of that gruesome jacket design, and number the pages for the convenience of readers. What I do like is his impassioned attitude. He must be reprimanded sternly, however, when to prove the antiquity of experimental writing he mentions an upstart, Father Ennius, of the Second Century B.C. I submit an eminent Egyptian, Khakheperrensend, *2,000 B.C.* "Would I had phrases that are not known, utterances that are strange, in new language that hath not been used, free from repetition; not an utterance which hath grown stale, which men of old have spoken."

TOM PRIDEAUX

THE THREE MISTERS HARRISON

MEET ME ON THE BARRICADES. *By Charles Yale Harrison. Charles Scribner's Sons.* $2.00.

In *Meet Me On the Barricades* the first thing we are asked to believe is that the book is a novel. It is not. The second is that P. Herbert Simpson and two or three others who fly through Mr. Harrison's pages like fabulous witches (brooms and all) are real. Which they are not. The third is that witches know anything about Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Browder, Mike Gold, "proletarian literature," F. D. R., revolutions and Hoover. The fourth is that unbelief rages in the world. Which is true. The fifth is that the author is very confused. Which is also quite true. And so on.

If we agree with the author that his book is a novel and his witches are characters (or his characters witches) then we cannot credibly consume the myriad pages of sharp, highly advanced political (radical) discussion with which the book is supersaturated. On the other hand, if we find these politics real and absorbing I am afraid we shall be unable to accept the witches. We shall just have to imagine that Mr. Harrison himself is talking all the time and that the witch-and-dream magic setup is merely relief from the tediousness characteristic of some political talks.

This is a hard thing to say since the reviewer agrees with much

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of what Mr. Harrison talks about. But the fact is unconsciously admitted by the author himself when, little more than half way through his "story" he finds himself compelled to abandon novel structure for play structure. That this section (some sixty pages) is the best part of the book artistically proves my contention further and suggests that Mr. Harrison might have been more successful in turning his theme into a play altogether.

Plot there is no semblance of. Simply, there is a P. Herbert Simpson who is an oboist, has a wife who plays bridge and severely limits his sex-life, and who indulges in remarkable daydreams. These daydreams form the substance of the book and in themselves are so real as to make the dreamer and his life totally unearthly. Thus, while we find vivid descriptions of fighting in Spain as credible as any press dispatch (though infinitely better done) and Captain Pedro Seemson quite tangible a part of this fighting, it is impossible to realize that such grand visions are figments of the imagination of an innocuous little liberal-minded oboist! Mr. Simpson also meets with more success than any of us in daydreaming a conversation with President Roosevelt on Fifth Avenue (cleverly amusing and satirically anti-Stalinist); in envisioning an altercation between Browder 1932 and Browder 1937; in conjuring up Lenin, unable to sleep for Stalin's crimes, shot trying to escape from his grave; in creating a dream-lover, Natasha, who spurs him on to participation in the October Revolution, and takes him to a Czarist bacchanale where she jilts him (evidently symbolic of the betrayed dreams of the world proletariat.)

There is an Ascaso, a Spanish revolutionist of 1917 turned violinist who launches off into such involved, factional politics as the tragedy of Spanish anarchism and the P.O.U.M., the difference between a united front and a popular front, the Stalinist murder of the revolutionary leaders Andrés Nin and Camillo Berneri, almost as the Anarchist *Vanguard* or the Trotskyist *New International* would describe them.

And a third gentleman, a cynical novelist named Darrell, who delivers a whole (not to say posthumous) phillipic against Third Period "proletarian literature" theories, poor ghosts!

Now these three cross all the proletarian battlefields of the last quarter of a century. In the end, Ascaso, refusing to succumb to the widespread disillusionment in revolution, predicts that the workers will again "take to the road of revolutionary struggle" (in which we agree); Darrell ironically laughs that "the dialectical method is completely substantiated. . . . The revolutionists have killed the revolution" for good apparently; Mr. Simpson merely goes home to die in a nightmare not having said anything except that he is very bewildered and depressed. Which seems to re-unite the conflicting three Misters Harrison in the one; and which seems to indicate emphatically that had the author called his protagonists Misters Harrison 1, 2, and 3, and the book, A Political Trialogue—if an outright Shavian satire was unsuited to him —he would have been more honest with himself and with the reader.

DANIEL JAMES

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LETTERS IN BRIEF

From England two letters: D. S. SAVAGE writes that "PARTISAN REVIEW is being well spoken of in London. I have talked to several writers who think we ought to have as good a journal over here, but they admit its English circulation would be small. There is a very silly paper here, as you may know, called the *Left Review,* which badly needs such a corrective as PARTISAN REVIEW would supply." And JULIAN SYMONS, editor of *Twentieth Century Verse*: "Did I tell you how good I think PARTISAN REVIEW is? There are very few papers today that have so clear and integrated a point of view, whose Editors know so well what they're at." . . . From CARL PETERSON, of Chicago, a frank statement of the Stalinist position. He writes, apropos of Philip Rahv's article "Trials of the Mind": "Before the 'intellectuals' can be denounced for their espousal of collective security it will first be necessary for those who do the denouncing to prove once more that the class struggle of Marxism is a great reality." Mr. Peterson believes that the assumption of Marxism that capitalism causes war may have been true prior to 1914, but is now "outmoded." "Why," he asks, "should capitalists fight each other?" since "capitalism has nothing to gain by war. It has learned that lesson rather well if it has learned few other lessons." Charging Mr. Rahv with overestimating economics, he asks why no allowance is made for "spiritual factors," and concludes that revolutionary opposition to capitalism in wartime is utopian and can only lead to the victory of fascism. . . . From SYDNEY JUSTIN HARRIS, editor of *The Beacon,* Chicago: "I agree with Philip Rahv in his estimation of the Soviet Union and the Communist International. I can see no hope, however, from the Trotskyites or other anemic splinters which have no mass base. . . . At any rate, I think that PARTISAN REVIEW is doing a splendid job of cleaning house on the left, ... I admire you people: you'll land either in a fascist or in a communist concentration camp. And I'll probably meet you there." . . . From H. KATZ, San Francisco: "Having admired the old PARTISAN REVIEW I was not entirely convinced by the attacks on you in the *Daily Worker.* But now after reading several recent numbers I am convinced that your task is to stab all progressive causes in the back. Your adoration of a confused religionist like Franz Kafka is obviously intended to undermine honest proletarian writing. Novels like Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* and Jack Conroy's *The Disinherited* are worth fifty Kafkas plus Delmore Schwartz and Elizabeth Bishop, whoever she may be. In reviewing a book by Mr. Wilson, of anti-Soviet fame, your Mr. Dupee tries to hide the fact that Mr. Wilson is an enemy of Marxism—which Joseph Freeman proved in a recent issue of *New Masses.* And in the same issue of your magazine a pedant by the name of Eliseo Vivas ridicules the dialectical materialist philosophy which provides the working class with a firm base in its struggles against reaction and for a democratic front."

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